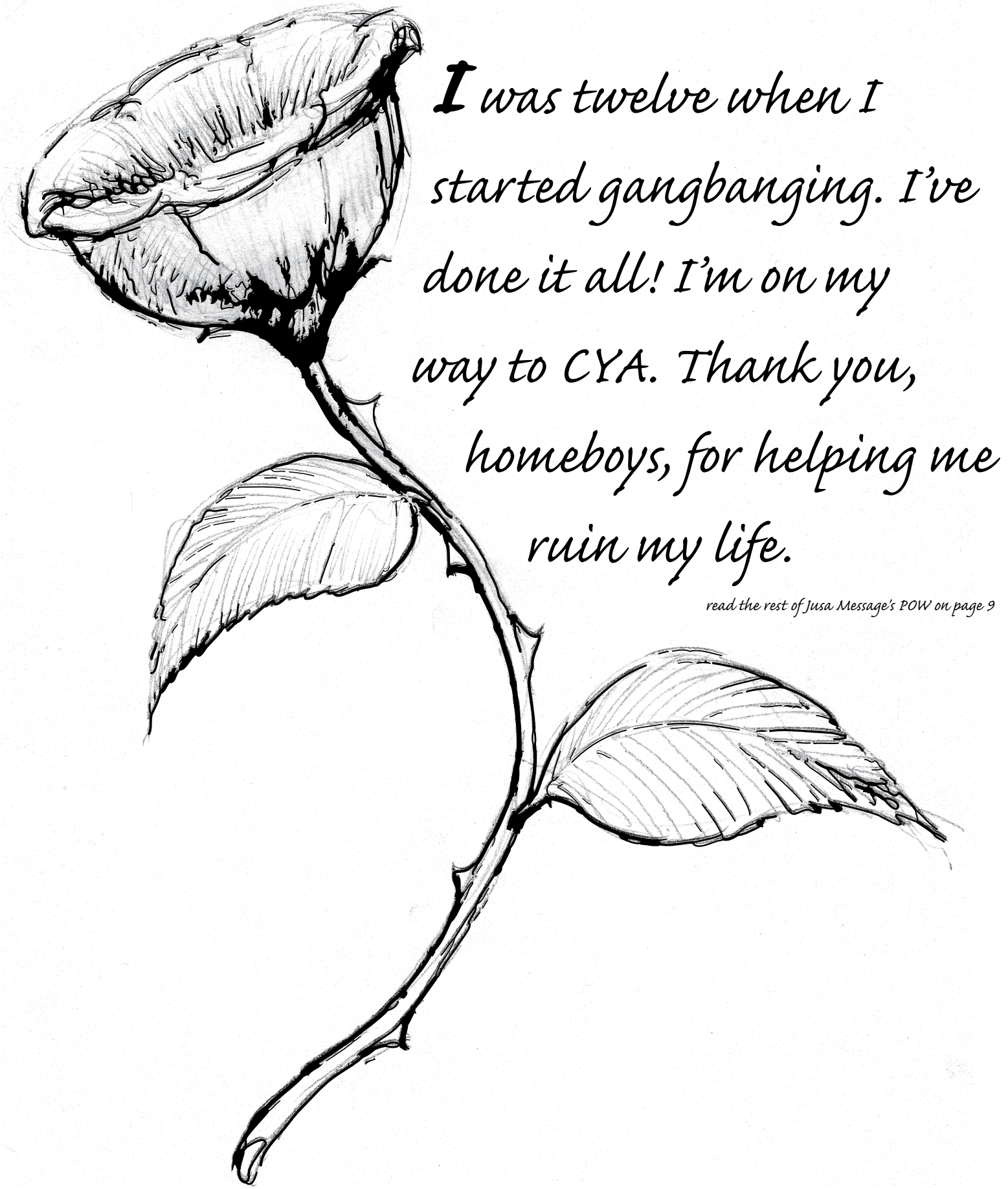

I was twelve when I started gangbanging. I've done it all! I'm on my way to CYA. Thank you, homeboys, for helping me ruin my life.

read the rest of Jusa Message's POW on page 9

EDITOR'S NOTE VOLUME 12.22

What an experience the last couple of days! Mondays and Tuesdays have definitely become our busiest when it comes to the production end of things, even when we take a bunch of work home with us to do over the weekend. Unfortunately, these days that's almost impossible, with summer here, there's a tiny chance work will get done, especially given the need to be with family and the various duties we have to prepare for the new week, like cleaning our homes, grocery shopping, paying bills, and whatever other obligations we have in our lives.

Well, like we said, work these days, has truly doubled when it comes to producing and publishing the issue you have in your hand. Over the last month we have brought into the fold the San Jose writers, and have included numerous pieces from our new friends in New Mexico, also known as the Land Of Enchantment. And in recent weeks the mighty Maricopa County in Arizona has produced an onslaught of writings. With this said, how do you readers like the new and improved Beat? Is it better? Do you wish we included the "weekly writings" in each issue?

This editor personally thinks the caliber of writing has only stepped up, riding our selves of the bullshhh that we once put into each issue. Shoot, you can't cut everybody a break, especially if they do not have the determination to step up themselves and speak from the heart, 'cause that's all you need to do to get published. But still the young homies and gangsters need to talk mess and glamorize the crap that keeps them trapped. Then there are the writers who love to update us readers of their whereabouts in the system, next court dates and when they are leaving. Then there are the romantics, who need to send their love poems to the loves of their lives, and not dump that lovey-dovey talk on us many readers, unless they are truly unleashing some serious heat.

Well we are thrilled to having to produce only one issue a week, this makes out lives on the production end of things that much easier. After Tuesday afternoon , we can then focus on the other needs of the program, which are plenty, including us Beat leaders raising the bar in bringing further awareness to our work.

Yesterday, we received a phone call from a wonderful Beat colleague, who shall remain anonymous. The question posed to this editor upon picking up the phone was that they had a friend who was ready and willing to make a check out for a Beat donation, but needed confirmation if it be made out to us. That was easy, of course checks are to be made out to The Beat Within! Anyhow, once I gave the info I was told by my colleague would get back to me, so I went back to my editing. An hour later the phone rings, it's our colleague who joyously announces that she had a check made out to The Beat in the amount of five thousand dollars! Unbelievable! Too kind! We both were thrilled, that such a generous donation was made to our work from a friend of our committed colleague. This made us truly believe if we could get ourselves out there in the community to share our work with more people, who aren't aware of the great work we do, that quite possibly more donations would come our way!

All right, the topics posed to the writers prior to workshops were "How Can The Incarcerated Help Each Other?" - From Pelican Bay to out-of-home placements and from county jail to county juvenile halls, prisoners find ways to help each other. In this question, we're not interested in what the system offers you, but instead, what you offer each other. We know of prisoners in the darkest holes of the most secure prisons (like the SHU at Pelican Bay) where prisoners organized and studied history and math and science and language, and then taught what they learned to one another. We know of a frightened young person who walked into CYA for the first time where another young person handed him a book and eased his fears. So tell us, how can incarcerated people help each other without waiting for outsiders to help? Have you ever benefited from other young people locked up with you helping you with your problems or giving you an education that you needed? Have you ever been the one reaching out to help another youngster in your situation? So tell us how prisoners can help each other.

Our second topic, "Describe The Power Of Thoughts!" - It's possible to be on an island experiencing clear water beaches and drinking a glass of ice-cold tropical juice while incarcerated. It's also possible to feel like a failure while owning three mansions and four Rolls-Royces. That's the power of thoughts... What we want to know this week is where the power of thoughts have taken you? Can the power of thoughts make things happen? Have you ever wished so hard for something that it finally became reality? Or on the flip side, have you ever wished something didn't happen so much that it ended up happening anyway? How do you use the power of your thoughts to get through the day, or to get into the head of a loved one you wish was with you, or to imagine yourself in the future? Describe the power of thoughts...

Lastly, the very popular, "One Photo" - If you could only hold onto one photo while on a long journey, what would that photo show? Your long journey could be through the criminal justice system or it could be a world-wide concert tour. What we want to know is what photograph would you like to have with you for the long run? Describe it to us, and tell us why it is so meaningful to you.

Of course you will read and view the POW (Pieces Of the Week) in this issue, but If this editor had to pick a favorite group of writers right now, it would have to be the two maximum security units in Santa Clara County. These young men are bad in the most complimented way.

These young men have so much respect for themselves and the program that the end result is a super program and great contributions from all! The hating is kept to themselves and the pain of incarceration is well put on paper, and not talking aloud and disrespectfully aloud during our workshops. Props to the staff and the young people in the max units in Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall for embracing The Beat Within!

Alright, This issue goes out to our new friends in Las Vegas Juvenile Hall who over the last several days were introduced to The Beat Within by our super colleague Sheerly Avni who took the time to fit in a couple workshops and meet the staff of their juvenile hall. A big thanks to Steven Graham, Manager of the Clark County Juvenile Detention in Las Vegas Nevada for his willingness to open the doors to his hall and have The Beat make it's presence felt. We truly hope this is the beginning of bigger things to come.

Also, this issue goes out to our colleague, super volunteer, Zoe Torres, who is leaving The Beat and the city to move to the great Northwest to start a new life. For the last couple of years she has touched many young people in our workshops in Alameda County Juvenile Hall and has played a huge role as not only a wonderful facilitator, but also a typist and editor. Thank you Zoe for the love and commitment. There will always be a place for you at The Beat Within. You have a beautiful heart, best with the next chapter.

See you few editorial note readers next week!

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The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our commuities already–we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

Spiritual Advisor: Jack Jacqua

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Volunteers: Rebecca Wahlgren, Elizabeth Crawford, Jen Zimmer, Sarrah Babcock, and Morghan Velez Young.

Book Donor: Marisela Norte

Beat Supporters: The Beat Within greatefully acknowledges the generous support of funders of Pacific News Service's Youth Communications Programs–California Arts Council, California Wellness Foundation, Christensen Fund, Community Foundation of Silicon Valley, Community Technology Foundation of California, Compton Foundation, Creative Work Fund, Cricket Island Foundation, Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, Ford Foundation, James Irvine Foundation, Marguerite Casey Foundation, Marin Community Foundation, Morris Stulsaft Foundation, Nathan Cummings Foundation, Oakland Fund for Children and Youth, Open Society Institute, Peninsula Community Foundation, Philanthropic Ventures Foundation, S. H. Cowell Foundation, San Francisco Arts Commission, San Francisco Foundation, Shinnyo-en Foundation, W. Clement and Jessie V. Stone Foundation, Stone Circles Foundation, Stuart Foundation, Surdna Foundation, The California Endowment, Tides Foundation, Van Loben Sels/Rembe Rock Foundation, Vanguard Public Foundation, Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation, Walter S. Johnson Foundation, Youth Justice Funding Collaborative, the Zellerbach Family Fund and individual donors.

Writers: Thanks to all the participants in our workshops in the San Francisco, Maricopa County Arizona, Santa Clara, San Mateo, Alameda, Bernalillio County New Mexico, Santa Cruz and Marin County Juvenile Halls. If you have any questions or comments about The Beat Within, or if you would like to become a subscriber, contact us at: 275 Ninth St. SF.CA. 94103 or call (415) 503-4170 or check us out at:

www.thebeatwithin.org

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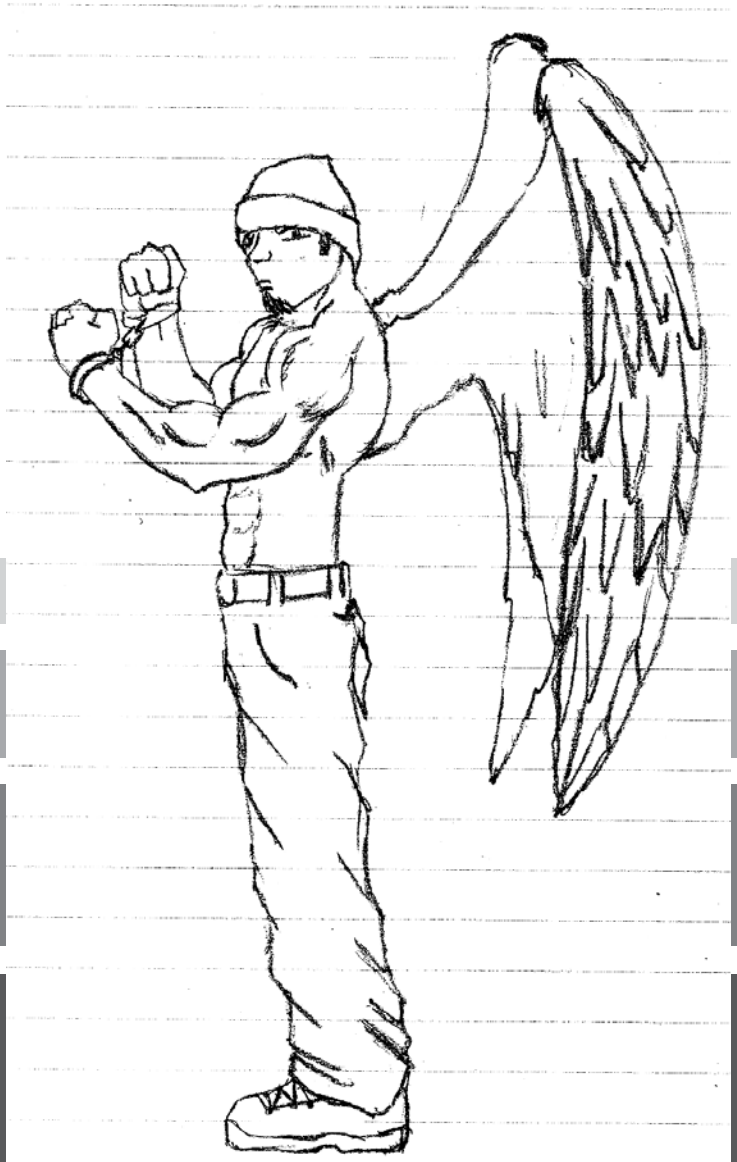


MARICOPA COUNTY ARIZONA

From The Beat: These poems were written by probationers In Maricopa County, Arizona, who were participating in a 21 day program within detention. One of the programming activities is to write their poetry to communicate the impact that drug use has had on themselves and/or loved ones.

A Tweaker's Story

This anger surges like a fire
These people still call me a liar.
I'm sitting at the corner in my card box,
Reminiscing about the time when I broke them locks
Just to get by,
so I could get high
on that meth
On that vile substance that draws me near
That safe haven that you should fear
It doesn't solve your problems
It only makes them more
Memories drift away like tide at full moon's shore
Even everyone that ever knew will have lots of broken lore
I've killed my family and belittled my friends
And never even thought of making amends
I thought about me and said "Screw you! Just leave!
Cause these things that you say keep messing with me."
"Those things that you say", I yell, "They're not true!"
But my face is sunken and my skin is blue
OK I have a problem. This might be true
But I'll stop I swear, it's just like the flu.
Two years later
I once solved my problems
And once dried my tears
But guess what the things I own they still contain fears
The horror is real! So lend me your ears
I went back to meth and did it for years
I thought I was stronger than the rest, but I'm not.
Now I'm sitting on my box reminiscing about the times I fought
Now I lost the fight and had to steal
Now guess what? Relapse is real.
I'm a perfect example of this crime of all crimes
Now I'm living on a corner cause of all my good times
I just wanted you to know this before our goodbyes
But this is all I could say, so please don't get high
Cause you already on your way
On the path of life or death
Now you know that's the ultimate test
Again this anger surges like a fire
As these people call me a f**king liar
I'm sitting on the corner in my cardboard box
Owning nothing more than a baggie of rocks

-SP Twenty-one Grad

From The Beat: For those who find themselves struggling with issues of trust and broken relationships, the carnage of drug use, on not only those who use, but their family and friends, is undeniable to those looking in from the outside. Sometimes the carnage is not as obvious to those caught up in the lifestyle of someone using/abusing drugs. It sounds like you've come to a moment of clarity about where drug use has or could take you! Is life over at that point or is there any hope for someone who has lost so much? The road to recovery is a long one, broken trusts and broken relationships take time to rebuild. Are you willing to recover and rebuild?

But my face is sunken and my skin is blue

OK I have a problem. This might be true

But I'll stop I swear, it's just like the flu.

The Penalty

Meth is lethal, death is the penalty
Word justifies the homicide when he dies
In his own iniquity, it's the meth
Slasha of the mantis
Rapsha comin atcha
We've got an MVP on meth
Addicts killa

-John

From The Beat: John, short and to the point about the ravages of this drug. We hear your point that drug use is serious and the penalty for addiction may be death. Do you know an MVP who is flirting with death? Are you wanting to reach them with the starkness of your words? Sometimes all it takes is someone who cares to make a difference.

Twist

Twist, twist, don't burn the bowl
Smoking it all, crystallizing the soul,
Next thing you know, you're dying real slow
People are scaring you from the shadows
After awhile considered a fiend
Finding your dope is your #1 thing
Eventually cops on the scene
Not worth your life, if you know what I mean
That foggy pipe won't set you free
You think you gangsta cause you smoking the G
I'm just keeping it short like life will be
put down the pipe just like me
You don't-you lose your family
Or possibly…captivity.
It's challenging finding sobriety
If you do you will see
You just got cured from a disease
Something that you wouldn't believe.
You finally stopped smoking the tweek.

-Billy

From The Beat: If you want to spend time doing the things you love the most and being with the people you love the most, how will you be spend your time and with whom? To stop smoking and to stay away from any drug is most times a life-long struggle. Kudos to you for acknowledging the truth of drug use and not settling for anything less than your own sobriety.

Death and Distress

Meth causes death
Meth causes distress.

-John

From The Beat: So what causes people to turn to meth knowing the end result is so negative? What is it about this drug that will have people paying for it with their own lives and forfeiting their sanity?

Meth Is Death

Meth is bad
Meth is sad
All I can see is meth labs causing the death of people that used to have.

-Jaron

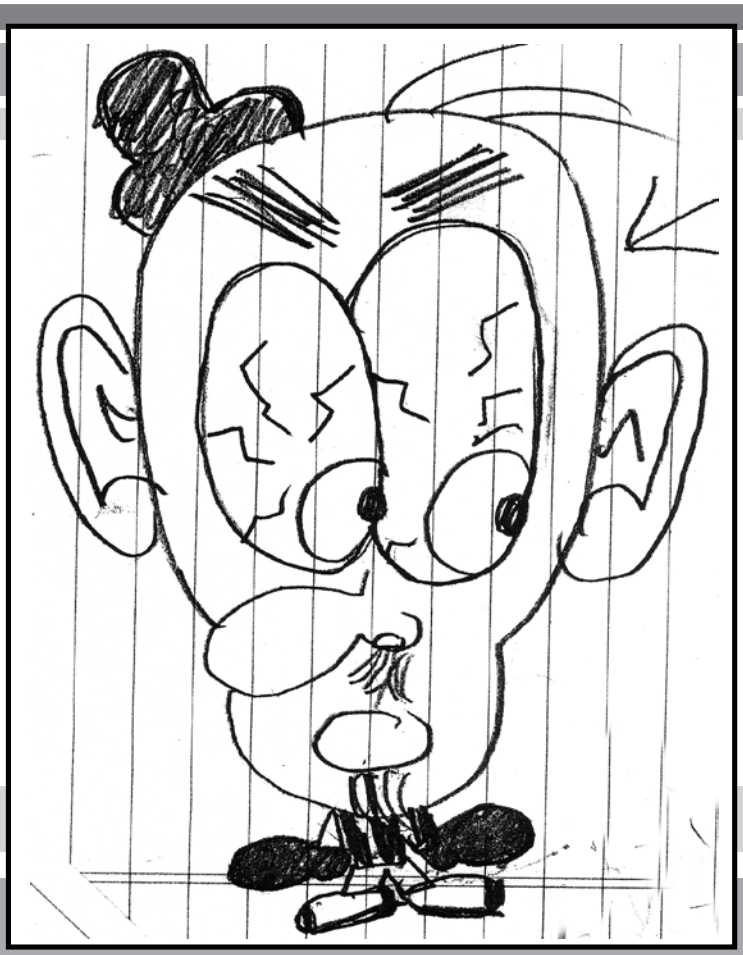
From The Beat: They had life, freedom, family, and most likely much more. Meth has never solved any problems, and indeed creates more serious problems. Why do you think so many people turn to meth when the stakes are so high? What do you have that is worth hanging on to?

Meth

Meth can be purple
Meth can be blue
But once it's got you
It's very hard to lose
Addiction will come quick
And you'll become very sick
You think it couldn't happen to you
Blowin that purple and that blue
But once addiction hits very hard
You feel like the world is coming down around you
And everybody will clown you.
Your body goes and your mind is gone
Your teeth start falling and the voices in your head start calling
You start stealing and robbing to get cash quick.
You go to your dealer
And ask for a teener
He goes to his stash and pulls out a seal
You give him the cash and you go over the door.
You dash to your spot and smoke up what you got.
You look for something to sell
Just to find out your dealer's house been raided.
Now you look for someone on the street to buy another t
The man says, "Sure I got what you need. Just come around the corner."
He pulls out his glock and says, "Gimmie what you got."
You make me the wrong move and he pulls on the trigger
Your brains fly on the pavement.
When your body is finally found, detectives look astounded
Your face is on the news and your killer's on the loose
"Another meth related murder in downtown Phoenix" the headline reads
Police have no leads is what it always seems
But the truth to tell is police and detectives never shed a tear
for the boys and girls who die smoking the purple and blue every year.

-Luis

From The Beat: Many tears have been shed by mothers, father, sister, brothers, grandparents, friends, schools, neighbors, counselors, mentors. You may not have seen a policeman or detective shed tears on the streets, but we wouldn't doubt that they have shed tears in private. You give a glaring picture of the life of someone caught up in drugs and what a final outcome could be. Have you lost someone to drug use? Have you forfeited a portion of your own life to drug use? What will you do to avoid becoming another statistic? This glaring picture of someone caught up is eye-opening, but we wonder what you imagine your life would look like if it was without drugs or violence?



Acid Does Not Rock

You bring the acid to the brain
All you see is the dark rain
Fire from the ground and water from the sky
Guess what now you're really high
How can this liquid taste so good?
And make you feel like the little train that could
You hear the colors and you see the sounds
Now you're being chased by the fricken clowns
You're trippin' out and wanna shout
So you do and out comes blue
Now you're scared
because you're gonna get marred
by all these scary beasts with hair
You're gonna die so you start to cry
Every body know this drug deprives
Acid kills

-SP Twenty-One Grad

From The Beat: This sounds like a sci fi or horror movie...imagine people being a part of it rather than just watching it on screen. Pretty scary, huh!? That is possibly why LSD has been in and out of season so quickly. We are thinking that the horrors are not just limited to acid use. We wonder what other horrors you have seen and what you have taken away from those experiences. This sounds like it's a scary drug for you.... I wonder if there are any other's that are scary? You are a creative writer and we hope you will continue to put your talents to good use. Value the power of your creative, drug free mind!

You hear the colors and you see the sounds
Now you're being chased by the fricken clowns
You're trippin' out and wanna shout
So you do and out comes blue

PIECES OF THE WEEK

I Regret

Everyday I look back on my life. It looks like all I've done is cause problems and fights. I have my family to remind me of every time I've screwed up – me getting pregnant, and running amok.

I'm still facing fears, trying hard not to cry tears. Drinking gallons of vodka and bottles of beer.

My little brother almost cries when he hears me on the phone. He can only hear me speaking, 'cause I'm not allowed at home.

My life has changed so much on the outs, but my family has no idea what I'm about. My tears burn my skin. I'm trying so hard not to cry. Things keep getting worse and I don't know why.

I'm a young teen and I'm already looking at life in CYA. My home girls say to keep my head up. It's easier to say. I'm not just running from the law. I'm running from myself, living at juvenile hall. I'm tired of regretting all the bad things I've done. All the drugs and crime stuff – it used to be fun. Now it's like a tape that plays over and over again. It's time to drop the dope and start to walk ahead.

-Kelsey, Santa Cruz County

From The Beat: Yes, it is time to walk ahead. Walk, not run. No matter how hard you try, you can never really run away from yourself, anyway. Think about the life you'd really like to have. And while you're thinking, let us plant this idea for your consideration: because you are a very good writer, think about keeping a journal and writing in it everyday. There are two very helpful things to do when you have a lot on your mind. One is to find another person who will listen to you. The other is to write about your feelings and thoughts. Each of these activities is helpful. And if you ask us, we'll get you a journal.

The World Should Have Peace

I feel like the world should have peace and stop all of the violence that is going on. All of these gangs and hoods should just come together and make peace in the world. If that day ever comes, we could just smile, laugh, and kick back. Nobody would have to worry about nothing.

I wish the world was a place that you can walk anywhere you want to, but with these gangs, you can't walk down the street without people askin' you where you from. But just like Martin Luther King said, I believe that one day everything will be better. People should treat others the way they want to be treated. But one day the world will come together.

-J, San Francisco

From The Beat: You are very wise at your young age. Do you think there will ever be peace? What do you think needs to happen in order for there to be peace? And what part do you play in the solution? Do you think gangs are the only problem that's going on in the streets? What else needs to change for peace to truly exist?

Listen Up Incarcerated!

If we all were to actually sit down and talk to each other with in the Juvenile Detention Centers we could learn things like me. I have learned that if we believe in our selves enough we can do what ever we put our minds to. Remember that the most important tool to success is the belief that you can succeed!

We all may need some discipline and direction in our lives, but we all have long lives ahead of us and it is full of choices. If we make the right choices our lives may be easer and if we make the wrong choices we could end up in Detention halls or Prison, maybe even dead.

-Joe, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: You couldn't have said it better, life is all about choices. There are only two choices in life, the wrong choice or the right choice. You know what happens w

Touch My Heart In Soul Part #4

My life has played me and gave me 9 years in 2 strikes
Pressuring me to release my pain and fight.
But I maintaining my anger 'cause the result on me,
Modifying my time so it can increase so I can't get release

Family can't believe this game that crossed the line,
I'm an individual wit' my long time.
Required to be the man to step up to my wrong,
And I will do all my time by myself alone.

But knowing my family is with me through any weather,
My babymama keep reminding me that we belong together.
I'm feeling that my life is falling all the way down,
I did the crime so why should I sit around and frown.

I'm still that youngsta that's going to Heaven,
By time I get home my son will be seven.
No matter what, it's still one person in charge of this land,
And his name is "GOD" that's the man.

-Lil' Papa, Alameda County

From The Beat: How has your life played you? Didn't you have a choice in the matter? Now you have choice in how to run your program the next nine years, how do you envision the coming days, months and years? It sounds to us like a man on mission to do his time and return to the loves of his life. We admire your strength. Stay in touch where ever you go!

The Time Is Now

I wish I would have got killed that night instead of going to jail.
Maybe I would be in heaven now instead of runnin' laps in hell.
But instead I wait
For a judge to tell me my fate
at my next court date.
Or maybe not
My ninja just got out Friday and Saturday he got shot.
Dead on arrival is what they said
I wish you could see the thoughts in my head.
Thinking damn that could have been me or anybody else in here.
But what I did is not shed one tear
I made a promise to myself and anyone else who cares
That I'm gon' change my life.
Not when I get out
But now right now.

-Jesus Coleon, Alameda County

From The Beat: You say you would have rather died than go to jail? Say what? Come on young man, you have mad skills, you have a gift with language, you have to create a plan and follow through and leave the doomsayers and the haters at bay, move on with your life and take advantage of the good there is plenty. Sounds like you are ready to do just that, we hope you can move beyond the b-s that plagues you here in the hall and where ever you go from there and find a little faith in the name of the homies that have died way before their time.

My Life

I was born in SF General hospital to a family of 5, me, my mom, dad, sister, and brother. We lived in the same house my whole life. I grew up getting everything I wanted. When I was 10, my mom and dad got divorced. It tore me up and I changed forever then my mom married my step dad honestly I don't like him that much, but after awhile I got used to him. I got here because I made the wrong choices with the wrong people. I was under the influences at the time. I gotta live with my consequences. My mom and dad want me at home, and I wanna be home also.

-Michael, San Francisco

From The Beat: This is a great piece in that it gets the point across with very few words. We're sorry to hear about your mother and father's divorce. We know it was probably a very difficult situation to deal with. In living with your consequences, are there things you're doing now, so that you won't have to suffer the same consequences again?

PIECES OF THE WEEK

My Fam Away From Home

The homies and the block became my fam away from home at an early age of eight. I have a fam at home that provides me financially and that is there for me physically and emotionally, but even with the fam I got at home, there's still something I went looking for. The homies and the block became that thing I was looking for, even wit' my fam providing for me at home, they couldn't give me what I found on the block.

See when I found the homies they provided me with things other eight-year-old kids dreamed of having.

By the time I was twelve, man, I had everything I wanted. Now at the age of a young teen, looking back at all the shhh I been through it ain't really worth it, but now it's too late. I'm out; to all doing time be safe.

-Young Squeeks, Alameda County

From The Beat: Eight years old is so young! What were the things you wanted that your family couldn't provide? Were they material things, that feeling of acceptance, or being cool? Your piece is so honest and thought provoking, and we wonder if you could elaborate on that one point, because we think a lot of other people in your situation might relate. Tell us what it was, exactly, that drew you away from your family and toward the streets. Also, you say it's too late, but one positive thing about starting so young is that it's really not too late—you can still choose a different life, but you should do it soon.

Get Inside My Head

Get inside my head you'll see many things.
But the only thing that needs to be seen are my thoughts.
My thoughts will show you what's needed to know,
show's you the inside of the d-home.
I think of myself on a big stage,
dancing and singing on Broadway,
or being underwater swimming with the fish.
On stage getting an award for best actor,
creative storytelling, or funniest/saddest movie.
Walking on the runway showing newest fashions.
But every time I open my eyes I see my self in a small room, white walls no color.
So I close my eyes and run through my thoughts again.

-Spike E. Hare, Land Of Enchantment

From the Beat: Your thoughts give you the power to change. Use what's in your head to stay out of the D-home, and follow your dreams. Put your self on Broadway or in the movies, swim with the fish and be as free as they are. Don't put your self in that small room with white walls and no color.

RIP

I know a lot of ninjas who are dead and gone,
dead and layin' in a casket six feet under.
Why my ninjas had to die,
we was livin' the good life:
Pooh, you know I miss you,
you neva leave my thoughts.
Curt you was caught in the crossfire,
left layed dead on the spot
that hurt my heart.
Stevie you was tryin' to play ball,
caught two in the head and fell.
Hope y'all didn't go to hell,
I'm just tryin' to live it up and never fail and stay out of jail.
Can you feel?

-Jamoni, Alameda County

From The Beat: Considering how much it hurt us to type this piece, it must have hurt you ten times more to write it. We are sorry you lost so many people you care about, and we are glad to see that you yourself are trying to stay out of jail. It seems that you need more than just trying though – you need a real commitment. Imagine if, 20 years from now, the ghosts of Pooh, Curt and Stevie were all smiling, saying, damn, my boy Jamoni made it – he grew up to become somebody! Wouldn't that be a great thought and motivator?

This Life

Life proceeds to move whether you wanna move with it or not.
If you don't like how you are, if you want you can change,
but if you want to it's going to take focus and thought.
In the beginning of the journey, it's going to seem strange,
all the deranged thoughts you should make decease
so you can focus on being who you want to be.
At first it's hard to see, but you start off how society wants you to be,
until you decide to be yourself and isolate everyone else.
No creampuff shhh, but you gotta step yo' life up drastically.
'Cause the worlds tryin' bring you down and the ratio's rising erratically.
You frantically worryin' 'bout how your next amount of money is going to be received,
but be patient 'cause when the opportunity comes, you'll be relieved.
I really don't know my meaning for writing what I wrote but,
I hope you get something out of it.
'Cause me, when I get out, I'm gonna focus on my life and have life-long benefits

-Matt, Alameda County

From the Beat: Wow! This is an excellent piece, both personal (like you're giving advice to a good friend or a kid brother) and also "big picture", about how society perceives young men. What do you mean by "ratio"? We think we understand your meaning, based on the context within your poem, but we'd like to hear more about that. You point out a universal truth: it requires patience and focus to get what we really want out of life and to have life-long benefits.

Click-Click

If I went on a trip and could only bring one picture
It would be of my family, cause they're very important to me.
One thing about the picture is that it would have a lot of my friends in it.
I would look at the photo every chance that I get
'cause you never know what could happen to everyone.
I take a lot of pictures when I'm at home
'cause it's something that helps you remember people.
I got one picture of my grandmother and she died in 1996.
When you have a photo of someone that you lost,
every time you look at them it remind you of that moment.
When I get a chance to go home, I'll take some pictures with my friends.
On the outs, everybody got picture phones, and they take pictures of everything
that they see cause you might not get to see it again.
One day, me and my people was all dressed up and had a lot of cameras, just having fun. When you go to birthday parties you take pictures that are very special.
Whoever invented cameras are getting very rich
'cause at every party and event all you hear is "take a picture!" "click" "click".

-T-Face, Alameda County

From The Beat: Thank you for sharing your interesting thoughts and memories of photos that have meant a lot to you in your life. It's true that taking photos can be a lot of fun, bring people together, and help us remember those who have moved on or passed away.

If I Had One Photo

If I had one photo it would be of my family all together, because they are some of the people I care the most about in this screwed up world.

This photo doesn't really exist, except in my mind. If I did have a camera, I would try to get all of them together, in one shot. I would like my dad to be in the picture, but he was never really in the picture.

-A, Santa Cruz County

From The Beat: Beautifully written, and beautifully sad. The last sentence is a real knock-out. You should be writing every day.

PIECES OF THE WEEK

One Photo

Was sup with The Beat readers? As for me, I'm all right; keeping my head up and staying solid, feel me? But yeah, one photo? Man, if I was to be on a long journey, and was able to be on one photo, that photo, picture, whatever you want to call it, well it would be the photo on my wall.

The photo on my wall is a picture of my baby momma and my son. I would bring that picture because it means the world to me. The reason that picture means a lot to me because they are the people I love and cherish and care for. My baby momma I love to death, same thing for my son. My wife and my son both give me a lot of motivation to do things that I think I can't do, and things I want to do. If I had that picture on a journey to climb Mt. Everest it would motivate me to get to the top.

-Tone, San Francisco

From The Beat: A child can act as motivation to do better. When your son gets older, what will you teach him from your experience with life? What are some of the lessons you will instill in him from what you learned about where you've been? With the news you just got from court, that Mt. Everest climb is probably looking much shorter, huh?

The Power Of Thoughts

If I wasted the mind I was blessed with, what kind of person would I be? Would I be as strong as I've become over my 17 years of livin'? If I didn't recognize my potential and intellect, would it be hard for me to focus on the future and the reality of the real world? If I didn't spiritually believe truly at heart, would I be able to make it mentally under the circumstances I'm facing as of now? if I claimed to have faith, but question what the Lord has planned for me, am I really believing, or am I being doubtful. If I doubt the Lord or question Him too much, will He put me behind in line even if I'm next up for a blessing?

How do I maintain being sane? I understand that people go through things, we are only human. I learned to just let myself feel what I'm feeling when I'm feeling it. If I try to run away from it, it just comes back twice as hard. Once you're mentally free, you become an outlaw. Once you're an outlaw, you learn to deal with emotions and confusion. Love, pain, it's powerful, full of passions, I kill negative energy. Does that make me an assassin. You choose negativity or positivity.

-P. Crooks, San Francisco

From The Beat: You are asking some profound questions in this piece, the kind that nobody can really answer. We're not exactly sure, though, what you mean by becoming an outlaw when you become mentally free. Is this a good thing or a bad thing? You say that you've learned to let yourself feel what you're feeling when you're feeling it, so we would be very interested in reading what it is you're feeling right now.

Institutionalized

I feel like I'm free. Living in a facility.
Why? Probably because I'm away from most negativity.
I feel like I'm at home because I'm always all alone.
I have a blanket to keep me warm and keep me tight.
I don't have to worry about where I'm going to sleep tonight.
I get food. I get to sleep. I don't have to worry about waking up the next morning
and worry about where I'm going to eat.

-Estephen, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: You have made quite a point in this piece. For some young people being in detention is way safer than the streets. Doing what we feel comfortable doing is easy, but "stepping out" to take on something new may be scary. Do you want to just be comfortable or are you willing to "step out" and take a more positive direction?

Thoughts

So many thoughts going through my head
It's either posted and getting bucked at
And get filled with lead
Or be in jail an thankful that I aint dead
I wonder why my life ended up like this
I wonder why this world so cold like it is
Nothing in life is fair
I feel like giving up
Like maybe I shouldn't care
My head is spinning in circles
Sometimes it gets to the point where I don't
Even know myself.
I start feeling these feelings that I never felt
It get to where I know I'm not myself
I feel numb
Living the life I live it just ain't even fun
I'm threw with this life — I'm done
In and out of jail
Sitting here no bail
I was always a spoiled child
Got everything that I desired
I always told the truth
Never known as a liar
Always spoke what was on my mind
Sometimes confused I'm getting old and running out of time.

-Lil' Bipp San Francisco

From The Beat: When you say you feel like giving up, it hurts us because we know your potential. We know you're capable of great things. Being able to speak your mind is a great quality for a person to have. How can you utilize that so you won't feel like you're getting old and running out of time? Thank you for sharing such an amazingly honest poem.

Lost Because Of Me

My name is Naya. I am a 15 year old girl who is lost in my own world. I feel hard to hold. I feel unloved and unwanted but not forgotten. As each day past I wonder what's next. I wonder if it will happen. What, you ask? Going back to the same empty walls time after time haven't I learned my lesson. I am misled and looked bad upon when I'm a kid that has problems but I'm not too bad but not too good.

I ask God everyday can I live another life but not mine I wonder why. Being incarcerated it's not for me. Group homes, foster homes ain't the place to be. What is? My cousin house, school, and me getting a job. Me turning my life around to make a change. I have bad vibes I knew was going to happen. I tell myself there no reason to be scared because it happen for a reason. So be positive and learn a lesson because god brings great blessings.

-Naya San Francisco

From The Beat: You've come to some really wise insights throughout this bad experience. What do you think needs to happen before you can stop coming to these "same empty walls time after time?" Do you feel like it's all on you or do you think there's a role other people play in that too? We really enjoyed your honesty and hope you find the answers you're looking for.

A Lil' Boy, Part I

I have a lil' boy inside my heart
He's in a home he's all alone
He's looking for his mom
but she's nowhere to be found
Now this lil' boy is always around
now the lil' boy is sad so he gets mad
Probably because of all the things he's never had.

-Estephen, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: You are an insightful young man. We see that you are grieving for the loss of your mother and longing for a nurturing love. The loss of a parent is always difficult and trusting sometimes can be equally as difficult, but there are those that care... allow them in. You deserve that type of love.

A Lil' 'Bout Me

It started when I was twelve
Runnin' away from home and in the street raising hell
Stealin' cars and hittin' licks to out there to boostin' counterfeits
But it got worse when I moved to Richmond.
That's where I started sellin' dope and took life as a joke
That all changed when my bro Keith got smoked
He was only a young teen which made this young ninja mean!
During that time I ain't respect nobody
You disrespect you'll meet my potna shotty
I was a nympho, ain't feelin' nobody
Let's skip it up a couple years
Now if you look on the inside it's even more tears
Seventeen patnas gone now be in my position.
That really hit home
One in the hospital with two to the dome.
People look at me and wonder what I be about.
Nowadays my feelings can't even be found.
I been through hell but my personality no one can tell
But my by actions you could damn near tell how many times I been to jail.

-Domo, Alameda County

From The Beat: You've written about your life in bits and pieces before, and it was always moving and thoughtful, but in this piece you really step up and dig deep into all the painful things you've seen (and done). We don't see a young man without feelings, but with feelings that are so deep and profound he doesn't always know what to do with them. You have lost a heartbreaking number of loved ones, and we see and feel the pain in this honest and beautifully rhymed piece... but now it's on you. You have a duty – out of memory of all this death – to fight to be the one who lives on, who changes his life, who keeps his humanity, who honors the dead by honoring his own life and treating that life with respect. Can you do that? We're counting on it!

Time In Jail

A good percent of all young adults find themselves spending at least a day or two in jail.

As if it isn't hard enough just being in jail we have to worry about other inmates as well. Although there is an alternative, for instance, instead of spending our time gang banging and putting hits out on people we could be putting together a support group for inmates who have recently lost some body close to them.

Another way we can help each other is by starting a bible study group and help each other to find Christ. We could help each other to get on the right path before the wrong path leads us to our death.

For instance I was on that wrong path for quiet a while. I was robbing people for anything and every thing I could. I was smoking meth and didn't care about anything but getting high. I would have stolen from my own mother to get me a bag.

It wasn't until I got locked up that I started going to church and studying the bible. It wasn't until my preacher told me, "Pretend your life was made into a movie. Is that movie something that you would want your younger siblings to watch? Is that something that you would want your parents and grandparents to watch?" That day I decided to change my life. In a way I'm glad to have been thrown in jail, because I would have surely been killed and because the bible says. "To learn you must love discipline; it is stupid to hate corrections." So to the corrections department, thank you.

-Julian, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: It's good that you found an alternative to the gang life and the life of crime. Continue with the path you are on, and talk with the staff to see if you can start some of these programs, although we're sure that some of them are already in place. If you are not sure simply ask a staff member and they can direct you in the right direction.

Think About It!

We all can help each other because we all are sittin' in the same cell. The majority of youth here in the hall, their parents are divorced. My dad wasn't there for me and I probably only have one homie who has had their dad there for him. See, we all come from the same environment; we all are influenced by the same people.

I noticed how the ones who call me their homeboy always want me to start a fight, always want me to mess up my program for the stupidest reasons. Yeah, dude probably looked at you wrong! Who the hell cares?

Man, I'm eighteen years old, 'bout to be nineteen years old. I'm a man. I'm tired of messin' with this petty gangbangin' shhh. If you guys wanna mess up your lives for somethin' somebody else started, feel free to do so. Nobody is gonna tell me how to live my life. I'm a man. Okay, he's from Southern California, I'm from Northern California. Wow! Are you serious? Are you really serious?

I was twelve when I started gangbanging. I've done it all! I'm on my way to CYA. Thank you, homeboys, for helping me ruin my life. I'm not no lil' kid any more, and most of you ain't either. I'm a warrior, no matter where I'm from. I've been jumped by fifteen people at one time, gotten the livin' shhh kicked out of me, and you know what? I went home and my mother cried. I did that to her. I made her cry hundreds of times for my homeboys. I put my life on the line for my homeboys. I haven't got to see my two lil' sisters grow up.

I don't love none of you. I don't even know you guys. But you know what? I care for you guys. I wish you could see reality. No one's going to be there for us when we're locked up! No one! No one is going to do your time for you.

I have accepted God in my life, whether He's even real or not. I'm going to lead a good life. I wanna live like a normal person. I don't want to be a loser and you don't have to either, for real, homies. Think about what you're doing. Think about it — it really don't make sense. You ain't no man 'til you live for yourself and nobody else. I ain't nobody's female dog. I ain't gonna let no loser in the pen who has no life and is going to bring me down with him tell me what to do. I am a man and I'm going to live like one! Try it, before it's too late.

-Jusa Message, Santa Clara County

From The Beat: What a terrific piece this is! When we read a piece like this, you don't have to tell us that you're a grown man. It comes through loud and clear. Yes, it's tragic that you matured too late to avoid following others (who never had your best interests at heart) into this hell, but that does not mean that your life is ruined. It isn't! It's just beginning, even if you have this difficult obstacle ahead of you. We have confidence that it is just another obstacle that you will be able to surmount and overcome. We love what it tells us about you that you have accepted God in your life "whether He's even real or not." It reminds us of what one of our favorite Beat Without writers (SunMan'sLight) once wrote, that whether God exists or not, it's better to live your life as if there is a god. This is an inspiring piece, written by a responsible young man on his way to becoming a responsible adult citizen with a great deal to teach. Do what you have to do in CYA to keep your head down and your chin up, and keep your eyes on the prize. Thank you for this!

If you guys wanna mess up your lives for somethin' somebody else started, feel free to do so. Nobody is gonna tell me how to live my life. I'm a man . . . I have accepted God in my life, whether He's even real or not.

PIECES OF THE WEEK

God's Will

Today is Tuesday. Tomorrow I have court, and I have a good chance of going home. After a year of not being at home, I feel I'm ready to go back. I have decided that I will have faith in God, and I feel good because before I did that, I was anxious and on the edge a lot, ready to go bad. But I knew that if I did, it would hurt me in the long run.

When I began to think about the alternative of not going home, I imagined myself coming back to the unit and taking off on whoever wanted the beef, but my whole issue is my anger, so if I relapse into old behavior and allow myself to regress into that state of mind, that will only prove to them that I haven't matured.

If God wills it, then I'll go home; if not, that is still His will, which means He feels that by not going home, it will benefit me in the long run. I gotta get further with the movement though wish I could write more.

-K.K San Francisco

From The Beat: We have watched you mature over a long time, KK, and we admire your ability to think, to reason, and to explain your point of view, even when you are angry about what you're writing about. So we know you have the strength to control that beast called temper, if you put that first-class mind to the task. The fact that you felt (or feel) anxious and on edge about going home after such a long absence is completely understandable, and actually shows us how mature you've become. Only children pretend to be afraid of nothing. We hope your faith in God is the ingredient in your life that lets you move through your struggles without giving up your freedom. You have a lot to give, so go out and learn as much as you can, and then teach as much as you can!

A Letter To Judge Baca

My name is Joseph. I would like to express my goals to you Your Honor.

One of my friends got him self involved in a bad situation were he had gotten shot many times and now is on his way to prison. That has opened my eyes; I don't want to be like him. Your Honor it made me realize that I need direction in my life, I would like to go to the NMYCA boot camp challenge. I think this will help me a great deal and I intend to achieve that.

I know that you might want to give me a year or two at YDDC. The most important tool of success is the belief that I can succeed. I know now that I believe that I can succeed. I believe in me. I'll never know what I can do until I try, I am ready to do this and whatever it takes Your Honor.

I know you will make the right choice for me, Your Honor and I do appreciate that.

Sincerely,

-Joseph, Land Of Enchantment

from The Beat: We would like to thank Judge Baca in Bernalillo County, New Mexico who received this letter (piece), and asked us to put this thoughtful letter in The Beat. We are honored to do so, and we hope that young Joseph, is doing a great program where ever he is.

My Father

My father is like the rain.
One day he comes.
Then he's gone.

-Jose, Santa Cruz County

From The Beat: This is a great poem. Thirteen words, not counting the title. These words say more than lots of books we've seen.

. . . so if I relapse into old behavior and allow myself to regress into that state of mind, that will only prove to them that I haven't matured.

I Must Not Think Bad Thoughts

Lookin' in the mirror with the gun to my temple
My apologies to the dealership, I won't be returning the rental
This is what my young life has been brought to
All its gonna take is one shot not two
It will go so fast, I wonder if it will even hurt
Do I want to be cremated, or buried in the dirt?
Wonder what my family will say when they get the news?
Knowing my mom will mess around and blow a fuse
Why am I doing this? There is no clear cut answer
It's been a long suffering thing, sort of like cancer
Had it all for a minute, the money, the glory
It's hard knowing there's no happy ending to my story
If I'm not the one to take my life, then who will?
It won't be suicide just another kill
Wondering who really loves me and who will forget
Who did it all and who got things they regret
Tears stream down my face, knowing it's over
Nothing can save me now, not even a four leaf clover
Voices saying not to do it in my head
Don't fill your brain up with some lead
But right about now the evil has prevailed
My life as a human, how miserably I failed
The choices I made put me on the wrong path
One life, one mess up, why don't you do the math
Stuff really has me going insane
Headline news with a picture of a window splattered with my brains
The friends I thought, were never really close
'Cause nobody was around when I needed them the most
I say forget it and decide to pop a couple pills
To get me in my zone so I can really chill
Ain't no turning back now, already got the letter wrote
What they will be reading is my last quotes
Tried to stay afloat but kept sinking down south
Put the barrel of the gun all in my mouth
Then the flashbacks of my past slowly begin
They said my chances to survive are slim
I said, I'd never become a statistic but I became one
Six feet under the dirt there ain't no sun
I say a last prayer and begin to pull
I'm thinking about why I got to be such a fool
Leave as a legend, my name never forgotten
Corpse be good, never get rotten
So I say goodbye and end this peace
May my soul rest in peace
I feel the bullet penetrate and everything goes black
It's over now no, never coming back
I come back to reality and I'm alive and blinking
God its good I was just suicidal thinking
So now only one part of me remains
The normal one, not the one who's insane
Being a Gemini trips me out at times
So it's a good thing I could write these rhymes
Suicide to the bad side of myself
Now I can finally live in good health.

-Big Vick, Alameda County

From The Beat: The great poet Bertold Brecht once wrote the following words: "Can there be singing, in these dark times?/Yes there can be singing, about these dark times." This poem reminded us of these words. You are drawing all the different sides of a very real despair – we'd bet most of The Beat Within writers and many of its readers have had these same thoughts... and yet by putting them all together in one poem, you make room for the sadness that lies behind the despair, and the loneliness that makes the despair so hard to take... we feel it in all its heaviness as we read, and then we lighten at the end, as you, the poet, ease our burden by taking it into your song.

Chingon's Introduction

-Q-vole Beaters? I am now being housed in a juvenile facility located in a place called San Jose. I am in a maximum security unit. I have been here for about nine months and haven't even walked into the courtroom... talk about throwing away the key! Well, I am going to hit all that read this with a flow. I call it "Come Up."

"Come Up"
So many people tried
To get on the grind
But ended up dying
Or doing hard time
Ask why?
It don't matter
We of every race
Down to give up our lives
Over Ben Franklin's face
Crazed for just a taste
To get laced
Up in the game
Then you say
You seeking change
But in gangs
It's strange
Tryin' to be a G (gotta wife)
But secretly you wanna get laid a trade
But be discreet 'cause you paid
Ben Franklin's face to take AIDS
So rest in peace
In these streets we was made to fit in
Makin' money to fill a Swisha Sweet, pipe or syringe
Still no one sees the evil that lies up out there
Who the hell cares? The system don't!
It'll leave you broke and on welfare with no sense of hope
Tired of living bummy, so you slangin' dope to make dough
Puttin' food up in your tummy 'til the po-po knock on yo' do'
You turned nothin' into a lot, now you caught
With a Smith an' Wesson weapon, and a controlled substance called rock
It was nice while it lasted
Now you paying the price in a box like doing life up in a casket
Not once 'til you die will they ever see you laughin'
Not weak, but you wanna cry as you think, "What the hell happened?"
It all seemed like a couple days ago
I had the most beautiful wife and a pocket full of dough
It all seemed like a couple days ago
5-O kicked in my do'
Life without parole... now here I sit on death row
I sit here and think, reminisce and dream
Of all the things that the law took away from me
What the hell? My soul bound to a cell for eternity
Learn to be like me, with all these angered emotions burnin' in me
Satan, come 'a get me!
It's my life I hate, made the mistake
Payin' the price to life knowin' my fate
Can anyone relate?
Pissed off, as my insides shake
A shark that got the bait
Two-tongued, like snake
Now the light's on bright, but it's too late!

-Philly, Santa Clara County

From The Beat: Wow! For someone who has your great gifts — of reason, of thought, of self-critical analysis, and not least, of the ability to turn what others might view as the detritus of your life into fine art (and good looking, too)— it can never be too late! We don't know how much of your future you have given up to this uncaring system of pseudo-slavery, but we do know that you are already a teacher, already one who has the potential to save others, whether from behind walls or in front of them. This is no small accomplishment, even if it has come late in your young life. We don't know whether it's any comfort to you or not, but some of the greatest, most important literature ever written has come from those imprisoned by the power of authority that is, itself, imprisoned in its old ways of thinking, its failed ways of dealing with what we call "crime and punishment." Those that created this system are as motivated by Ben Franklin's face as you, and are equally as bankrupt of thoughts beyond that face as you once were. You can do nothing about "them," but you can do so much about you, and the many other "yous" that are always the "children left behind" (despite government slogans to the contrary). We admire you so much for what you've created out of a desperate struggle. And we look to you for leadership. Oh no, it's not too late! You represent our hope for the future when you use your head, and when you don't well, you know where you sit tonight, over in county.

When Time Stops

When time stops, what's going to happen? I don't know, but what I do know that I gotta stay moving until that time. Slowing down to me is like giving up. Giving up is like failing. I feel like there is nothing I can't do, so I don't even use those words, "I can't." I think other people should be the same way.

Everyone is about something. It has taken me a long time to figure out what I'm about. What am I about? Respect. I give everyone respect. If a person tries to get over on me, I walk away from them. That's why I'm always moving. It's always somebody always trying to get over. I do things that will let people see the good in me, like going hard and giving everything 100%.. I have been told by people that I changed their lives and the way they think because the way I speak and how I go on from day to day. I know if I keep it up I can help a lot of people trying to find out what they are about.

I'm back in here for something I did a long time ago. My past came back and got me when I became happy with my life. Before I end, I wanna say A's up!

Live happy, die old.

-Marques San Francisco

From The Beat: This is another great piece, Marques. Your description about how you handle yourself, and how that has affected others, is the very essence of respect, beginning with self-respect. We're sorry that your past misdeeds have caught up with you, but we are confident that the way you think and live your life today will lead to very different, and far better, consequences in the future. We're also certain that if you continue along this path you've carved for yourself, time will not stop for you for a very, very long time. Yes, live happy, die old!

A Lil' Boy, Part II

I have this lil' boy inside my heart and inside my mind. I see the lil' boy struggling

I see him go thru hard times. I want to help him but I can't. My pride won't let me.

I hear him cry in the streets and in my cell. I see him eating out of trash cans,

trying to survive. I see him wondering out on the streets all by himself.

You may look at me on the outside and you'll see a thug, trying to put it down for the hood. You may see a mad, evil person, but deep down inside there's just a lil' boy.

A lil' boy that's scared. A lil' boy that cries every day. This lil' boy has life problems.

I hear him scream. I hear him cry. I can feel his pain. It feels like I am standing in the rain with no jacket on. This lil' boy is sad; all he wants is a real life. He wants to be blessed, not cursed. Now the lil' boy is stuck in a hole. I want to throw him a rope to get him out, but how can I throw myself a rope if I am that lil boy?

-Estephen Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Estephen, you acknowledge that you have lived a hard life and have often gone without while growing up. But we want you to know we are amazed at what you have held on to...your heart open to love and be loved, your creativity, and hope for a better life. Although difficult to imagine that "lil boy" can be your best friend if you let him.

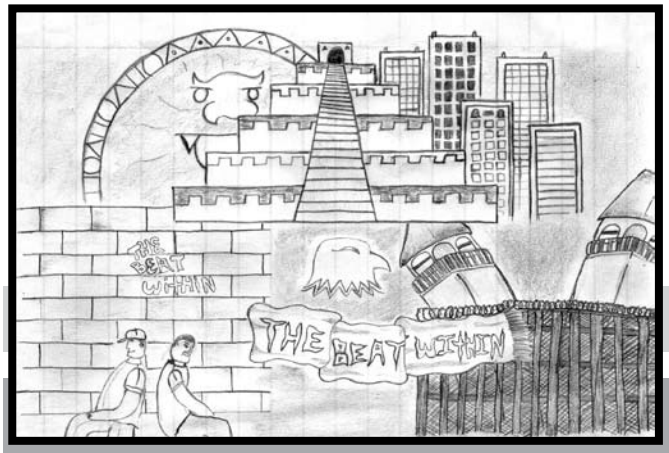
PIECES OF THE WEEK

Misery

Tears coming out my eyes 'cause all tha' shhh that I've seen
I see the world being twisted being blinded by green
But nobody cares they still serving the fiends, instead of helping these people by keeping them clean. I guess the world won't change, lil' kids getting shot at point blank range. It seems like everywhere I go every hood is the same,
Young ghetto kids wanting fortune and fame.
I still see us youngstas asking for help, 'cause we getting locked up living in cells.
We should've listened back then when we was getting hit with them belts,
But it explains us now we going through hell. It's really not those we bad. Some really got problems – others be mad.
So if you can help folks live another life, get yo' ass up and go save another life!

-Lil' Gumby, Alameda County

From The Poet: You have the eyes of seer, the soul of survivor, the talents of a wordsmith, the wisdom of someone who's seen too much for your age. These are not gifts we'd want to see in a pool of blood or an orange jumpsuit – we see that you are a lyrical describer of your life out there, and now we ask, with faith and hope: Will you use these gifts to escapes the dark things you've seen, and maybe even one day to live up to the last lines of this wonderful poem, and save a life yourself?



Helping Fellow Inmates

Well one way I help my fellow inmates is I treat everyone with respect and I don't put no one down! I do that because most of us including me came from neighborhoods where there wasn't any respect. I also keep myself in a good mood at all times, so others can feed off me and we can enjoy a positive atmosphere.

Another way I help others is my teaching and talking to others. I read a lot and study hard so I try and share what I know to others! With some inmates I am a listener because all they want is someone to talk to and express how they feel without them feeling like I will tell everyone. I let my trust to all be shown! I also help others in school and with their letters! I also don't make myself better than anyone else in here because I would rather be on the same level. Well I'm out for now till next time I remain. P-Love

-Outlaw, Santa Clara County

From The Beat: We love this piece. You sound far from the man who signed this piece, an outlaw! You sound like the guy if any of us have to stumble upon a cool ass detainee you are the one. We hope this spirit you possess in helping your neighbors and total strangers will continue upon touching down. What are your plan?

An Almost Fatal Accident

A time in my life when something so hurtful to myself caused a lot of people pain. It all happened in December of 2005. It was something many of have done plenty of times, driving fast and driving reckless.

I was in the most terrifying accident on my life, so far, me and my friends were driving to drop my girlfriend off at home. My brother, my friend, my girlfriend, and me was in the car at the time and were doing what you call "profiling" and "stunting" on a main street.

We were out of our minds, I was thinking everything was coo', since I have done this plenty of times, before. But what happened next surprised everyone, even the neighbors. My friend was driving another and I don't really think he was thinking when he made his next move. He cut me off as I was trying to pass him and bumped the front driver side of my car, causing me to swerve out of the way of nearly hitting a car! I thought it was all-good, that I was going to get just bounced up on the sidewalk and keep it pushing but like I said before, what happened next surprised everyone.

As I bounced up on the curve, trying to avoid hitting the van, I hit a huge tree going about 70 to 80 miles per hour. Everyone in the car blacked out so we didn't feel the impact at the time, but everybody gained consciousness.

Everybody except my girlfriend.

She was in the front seat, with no seatbelt. We saw that everything was all-bad, I woke up in a horrible sight, first I had to get the airbag that was in my face out of the way -- and what I seen next made me want to cry.

I seen that the engine had entered the car and landed on my girlfriend's face, who was still not moving. My first instinct, like everybody else's, would be "she's dead" and that's exactly what everyone in the car had thought. My brother was awake as well as my friend and they were moving freely. My brother had a cut on his head and my friend had dislocated his shoulder, but me I was fine, just some breathing problems, so after making sure everyone was alive, awake and good, I directed my attention back to my girlfriend. Blood was everywhere from my girlfriend, I tried to pull her out but she wouldn't budge so I tried the passenger door jammed by that time, I heard sirens and talking form the neighbors outside but I was on the van so I had to get away fast.

I went though the backseat and reclined her seat and pulled her out by making that move, I somehow broke her leg. Now that we were all out I had to get away throwing my girl over my shoulder and running down the street, as I'm doing that she awakes and when I finally get a good look I see something that's really really messed up. My girl's lip is almost completely hanging off. Her face was so hurt we flagged down a car who gave us a ride to the hospital.

When we arrived at the hospital we were rushed by nurses and doctors. They were all asking me questions. And the only one I paid attention to was "is this the girl from the accident." They put my girlfriend on a bed and told her not to move. She was still hysterical. I tried my best not to cry, to try and get her to see that it wasn't that bad. But I couldn't control my emotions. The tears was flowing. I couldn't stay long with her, because I knew and she knew that the police were on their way, I was on the run.

She told me to leave that she didn't want me to go to jail and that's what I decided to do. I gave her a kiss and told her I love her and goodbye.

After I left I went to my fiend's house and I was there by myself so I had a lot to think about, but before I had closed my eyes I knew that I had done something wrong, and that is what I call carelessness.

-Doug. E. Fresh, Alameda County

From The Beat: This on-topic piece is horrifying, blood-curdling, and yes, a very potent warning about just how "carelessless" can lead to a kind of darkness and regret that feels like hell. Paved with good intentions, as they say. Thank you for lending your clear writing and clearer mind to the telling of this tale – terrible to hear but necessary to heed. What happened to your girlfriend? Is she OK? Tell us the truth, have you ever driven wild again since then?

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

Thinking Deeply

Listen up my young homie, got some
Shhh on my chest
And what I say and what I mean
It might not be for the best
Some live their life on the west
Some live their life on the east
Some men are soft as cotton
Some men are rough like a beast
Go ahead and take you a piece
Of the American Pie
Some people stay on the ground
Some people jump up and fly
Some people get shot and die
Some people get shot and live
Some people take and forget
Some people just love to give.

-Eugene, Alameda County

From The Beat: You run the whole spectrum of what is tragic and also beautiful about being a person struggling to make it in this world. Which kind of "some people" are you? That's what we really want to know.

Powerful Thoughts Important

While I'm incarcerated, the power of thought is a big influence on my life. When I'm down and out I visualize me and my family walking out of the courtroom. When I finally reach the doors to the out side the slow breeze on that hot summer day cools the nervous sweat on my face from court. The sunlight warms my skin like an invisible blanket, and the taste of a newly lit cigarette in my lungs when I take that first drag. That visualization is what keeps me going while I'm incarcerated.

-Codi, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: It's good to use the power of thought to keep you going while you're incarcerated. Now use that same power of thought to keep you out of incarceration.

My Talk To Those Who Listen

What have I done with people that I know that come in here is to talk to them, ask them how they're feeling. Some people might be scared just to lend a hand but it's not that hard anybody can do it. You don't have to be friends with them, just let them know if they need someone to talk to you can be there.

While I was here I wanted someone I can talk to. It might not always be a staff or counselor it can be another minor that you know. Just like I help out my play-a-long brother, he needs someone and I was there to lend a hand. It might sound funny but it's not like only a few can do this, just put your mind to doing it, and believe what they say, you don't always have to show that you're tough or bad. None of that matters in here everybody is the same. We are all in here for a reason that's all. Just try to lend your roommate a hand or another person that you know 'cause it's hard for people in here.

-Looney, Santa Clara County

From The Beat: That's right, it's not hard, but it is. It takes courage to open up. It takes a special person to listen, and obviously you have the skills to perform that task and offer we assume good advice.

Sometimes I cry

Sometimes when I'm alone and cry
I cry 'cause I'm on my own
The tears I cry are bitter and warm
They flow like life but take no form
If I had someone to confide in
I would cry among my treasured friends
But who do you know who stops that long
To help another carry on
The world moves too fast
So they'd rather pass you buy
Than to stop and see what makes you cry.
Dedicated to my feelings: Mood – depressed.

-Clapa, Alameda County

From The Beat: There is a cold and heartless world out there, you're right... it's a lot of loneliness and pain. But poetry like what you just wrote can work as a bridge between people, because everyone has felt the way you do in this book at least once in their lives and probably about more.

The Power Of Thoughts

It means if you stay positive while you locked up, then you will do yo' time easier. But if you look at everything negative, then you going to have a messed up time. It's not hard to find out that being locked up is hard, and everything about it is messed up. There ain't really no positives except for you could think of all the bullshhh you done and work out. But everything about it is messed up.

-Lionel, San Francisco

From The Beat: When you think of all the "bullshhh you done," does it lead you to want to change anything about your future? Like what? If everything about doing time is messed up, then what are you planning to do so that you don't mess up again? By the way, Lionel, we really would prefer if you just took one topic to write about and not all three. When you write about three topics, you cheat us out of your thinking by not spending enough time on any one idea. (That's why we didn't publish your photo piece about your aunt, because it was only two sentences long and it really didn't explain anything.) So next time, pick one topic and write as much as you can about it. Thanks.

It's not hard to find out that being locked up is hard, and everything about it is messed up.

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

My Little Brother

The one photo I would like to have with me would be my little brother's because he means so much to me in my life. Without him I wouldn't know what to do. He is the reason I'm holding it down here. He is my strength.

-Daniel San Francisco

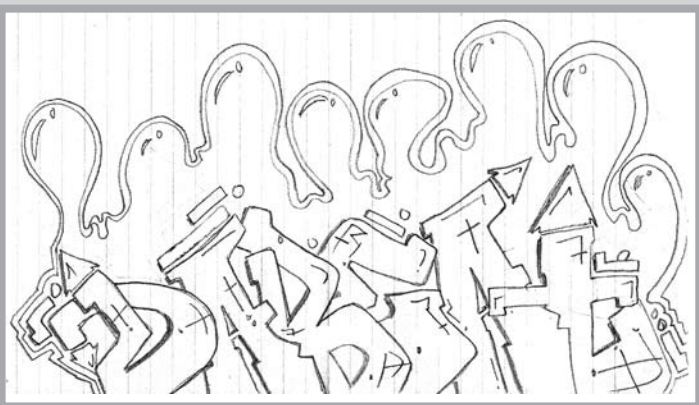
From The Beat: We love that you love your little brother so much, and we are glad that he gives you strength. But as the big brother, you must be his strength, and you cannot be that if you are not with him to guide him and teach him by your actions what is right and what is wrong. If you live by the principle that you won't do anything you don't want him also to do (because he will follow what you do and not what you say), then you should never have to come back to this place again.

Understand Me And How I Feel

Understand me and how I feel
For I know how you're feeling
I once was there
You're feeling angry
You're feeling scared
I know how you feel
I once was there too
Man I'm just like you
Understand me and how I feel
For my love is God and God is love
For I'm just a gangster, I'm just a thug
Understand me and how I feel
For I know how it feels when it kills
Understand me and how I feel
For I know how it feels deep down inside
When all you wanna do is cry or die
And now I hope you understand.

-Estephen, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Finding someone who understands or can relate to what you have been through can bring relief, and a sense of validation and belonging. Even in the midst of your own pain you are reaching out to others who have been through what you have. You say "I'm just a gangster, I'm just a thug".....Is that what you want to be? Are you willing to accept help to be someone different? We may not have faced life as you have Estephen, but we are listening to you and know that others are as well.



What Do I See?

When I look in the mirror I see a young growing male that has potential in life. That is what I see from my perspective at least. What I really want to know is what's going through the minds of the bystanders that cross my path.

From my point of view I see me going somewhere in life but people that walk past me being my mirror by the look of their facial expressions is not the same mirror I look at in the morning. I wake up each and every morning with the same question... what do I see?

-Wonder Bread San Francisco

From The Beat: You are very wise to say that you see in the mirror what others don't see in you. When you ask yourself that question in the morning, you have a really good answer. Where do your potentials stand? In what areas do you think you can be successful?

One Photo

The one photo I would hold onto during a long journey is a picture of my mother, two brothers, sister, and my baby momma, because seeing their faces keeps me living, happy inside, and doing the right thing in life, so I can provide for them.

The photo is so meaningful to me because that's my family, loved ones that death only will do us part, and I care for them a lot just like they care for me, ya dig?

-Jay Pitt, San Francisco

From The Beat: If that photo of your family keeps you "doing the right thing in life," then always keep it with you. Death is not the only thing that can part you, because you are physically parted now because of something you did to let the system take you from this loving family. We hope you see how important it is not to let this happen, not just because you can provide for them, but also because they are your strength!

Not A Lot Of People Like Me

Well, my first time locked up, no one helped me out. But since I been here, I been helping people run with this program. I been locked up in and out from twelve to fifteen. It's been three teenage years. I finally learned by lesson, but it's too late. Now I'm off to YA Alternative.

But lately I been teaching my new friend or inmates the program, which is to go to school, to respect staff, and to follow directions, so it won't be hard for their stay in j. hall. So I hope they learn something from me, because there's not a lot of people like me. So I'm out. See you guys in the outs.

-Billy, Santa Clara County

From The Beat: Of course it's not too late. We learn new lessons all through our lives, and we make changes all through our lives, even when we're old and gray! So, if you've truly learned a lesson, then you are much better off than you realize. YA alternatives don't last forever, so do what you have to do (with the lessons you've learned) to prepare yourself for a life that does not include handing over your freedom to a system of locks and keys. By helping others — and what you are teaching your new friends is definitely helping them — you are already helping yourself. Keep it up!

My Jefita

My jefita is the best in the world because no matter what happens, she's always there for me. She never lets me down.

But you want to know something. I am the one that doesn't want to understand. It's like I was blind.

I always make her cry. But today, Mother's Day, they just had to lock me up. Today I wanted to love my jefita and thank her for everything that she has done for me. This is how I pay her. She's crying. But I want to say I'm sorry for all the things that I have done. Sorry Jefita.

-C, Santa Cruz County

From The Beat: We believe you're sorry, and we bet your mom believes it too. But what are you going to do that will make saying 'sorry' unnecessary. What will it take for you to change course? Why do you do what you do? You are not a machine. You make choices. Why do you make bad choices? Answer that question and you will be closer to the day when you won't make your mom cry.

Here I Am, Again, Only This Time . . .

Here I am again, writing poems, wishing I had a smoke. But nothing goes right. I got a phone call from my mom – no idea what it was about. She was crying:

"Mijo, she's gone..." Now tell me, what do I do? Now I'm back in my cell with tears in my eyes. The wind is blowing and I'm looking into the sky, thinking of our time together. I'm hitting my head so hard, and thinking it's my fault she left. My finger bloody, knots on my head. I woke with bruises on my face. I'd cried into my pillow, most of the night.

-Joe, Santa Cruz County

From The Beat: We know what some of our readers don't know. We know that your cousin died. We also know that it wasn't your fault. And we're terribly sorry for your loss.

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

Thoughts

As I search through my thoughts, I sit and wonder
How can I keep my mind, body from goin' under?
These thousands pounds of stress that are lookin' at nothin' but numbers
Thinkin' about what I'ma do on the outs
I don't know... get a job, find a girl and come up on a house
Strive for stuff I never had
Find some ways to apologize to my mom for makin' her sad
A million thoughts racin' through my head
The last thing I don't wanna wind up is dead
Maybe make up for stupid stuff that I did
'Cause I don't wanna be behind bars when she's havin' my kid
Damn, these thoughts are raising, raising me up
Now I need to stop thinking and find my way to come up

-Chimy, Santa Clara County

From The Beat: No, don't stop thinking! Thinking is the beginning of change, the necessary first step to doing. And we think you're ready to do things differently, especially as you think about becoming a father. The best way to apologize to your mom for the tears you've made her cry is just to do it, and to mean it. And the best way to show her you love her is to stop doing the things that gave the system power to take you from her. Keep thinking, keep growing, and keep your eyes on the prize!

Missing My Son

When I look at my son I think about the good times we had. It makes me happy. I can't wait to get out so I can bring that time back . Man, I miss my lil' man. I don't want my lil' man to see some things I never seen in my life. If I can go back, I would never did what I did. It feel good to let this out.

-Anthony, San Francisco

From The Beat: You can't go back, Anthony, but you can go forward. As much as you miss you boy, just think how much more he will miss having a father in his life if you allow the system to take you from him! Like we said, you can't undo the past, but you can create a new future for yourself and for your lil' man. We hope you do!

Back To School

When I get out I'm go' play football and go to college. I'm go' stay out of jail. I been thinkin' about a lot of things in my cell. When I get out I'm go' get a good job an' go back to school. The first time in jail I did sixteen months straight in juvenile hall.

-Fat, San Francisco

From The Beat: If you follow through on this plan to go back to school, Fat Thug, then we will be very proud of you. Yes, it is time to stop giving away months and years to a cold-hearted system that can't care about you as much as you must care about yourself. Don't forget the words you wrote here!

Help Yourself

I have been in and out of juvenile hall for some years now, and every time I come back I see someone I was in here with last time. I always say when a person gets released, "Hey, don't come back!" and they say "Oh, I'm not" and there they go right back where they left off.

But truly, Beat, based on your topic, you can't help people not come back to jail while you're in jail because you're both down. But while you're out, you can help a person become a millionaire.

There are people that change people. I mean look at how Malcolm X changed.

He came out of jail a leader. You can change if you want to change in jail but it's

on you. A person can give you game on how to change, but it's a hundred percent on you.

-Sunny-D, Alameda County

From The Beat: We agree, and it's a very difficult thing. As you point out, lots of people leave juvenile hall thinking that they will never come back, but then they slip into their old habits or old crowd, getting up to their old tricks, and they get themselves locked up again. Malcolm X is an interesting example because he had such a radical transformation in his philosophy and conception of himself while he was in prison. When he got out, he lived with tremendous discipline in his life, and he was also a persuasive leader. What lessons can we take from Malcolm's life?

My Sister's Photo

If I could only have a photo, it would be from my baby sister, Celeste. I would always want her in my life. She is so special to me. I would die for her in a heartbeat. She means everything to me. I would always love her. No matter how old she gets, she will always be my little baby sister. She is the most important thing in my life. She keeps my life organized. I love Celeste so much, sometimes I wish I could be her mother and love her with all my heart, but I'm her older sister and she looks up to me and I am glad she loves me back.

Celeste is two years old. She knocks at my door, wondering when am I gonna open the door. Her smile is so beautiful. Her beautiful brown eyes with her long eyelashes. Her smile lights up everyone's day.

Celeste is always talking, always running around, hiding and hiding things. She's always playin' with water at the sink and helping out around the house and eating. She has the most softest skin ever. I really miss you.

Celeste, I can't wait to see you when I get out. I am gonna hug you and kiss you and I really miss you, baby girl. You're the best baby sister ever. Take care and I love you and miss you.

I would like my dad to be in the picture with my baby sister, because I love both of them the same, and even though that's not his daughter, I would still want him in the picture. Daddy, Celeste, I love you two guys so much!

-Lupe, Marin County

From The Beat: What a beautiful story to and about your baby sister. We hope you keep it for her, because she'll want to treasure it, when she grows up. What does she think has happened to you, now that you're in juvy? There's no real way she can understand why you disappeared, is there? When you return, Celeste may be really confused, yet very happy, because all of a sudden, there you are again. Make it work this next go round! Stay home!!

#1 Photo

My picture show's a lot of color,
of kids running & laughing.
My picture show's people dancing and having fun.
My picture looks new
but feels really old and people in nice outfits.
My picture show's six people, three boys and three girls.
The boys wearing suits with short hair,
The girls wearing dresses with curled hair.
My picture's me and family together forever.

-Spike E. Hare, Land Of Enchantment

From the Beat: That's one good thing about family; they will always be there for us. Never loose sight of your family, they are forever.

Photo

The one photo that I would like to have to make it through my day would be of my mom my little and big sis. So I can know who love me and who going to be on my side when I need them. 'Cause everybody who say they love you sometimes you don't even know if they really love you or not. But you know your mom going to love you due to whatever you do. That's why when somebody say they would be there for me and they is not my mom, I don't believe them at all. I know my mom love me. That's why I would have my mom photo.

-Weather Man, San Francisco

From The Beat: That's a really good reason to keep a picture of your mom. Do you think she knows how much you appreciate her? Hopefully, you'll be able to give this Beat Within to her so she can see a flicker of your neverending love for her. It's nice to have a mother you can trust because there are people who don't even have that.

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

One Photo

If I had only one photo to take with me as a long journey I would take a photo of my family. I would want a picture of everybody in my family but to shortin' it down we would all take one picture together. Me, my twin babies, my boyfriend, 'cause now he's part of my family too, my twins sister, my little sister, my granny Yetta and last but not least my mom.

That picture would mean the world to me while I'm locked up. Even if my fam bam come see me everyday I would still want the picture 'cause when I go to sleep I wanna have something that I can look at to keep me going on.

-Bossmac, San Francisco

From The Beat: To keep you going is a great reason to keep a picture close to you. You were being clever when you didn't limit the picture to just one person. But now we're sort of curious. If you could take a picture of one person with you, who would it be and why?

Mixed Feelings

It feels like a puzzle
With missing pieces that I can not replace
Feel lost like I can't find myself
Commotion always causes confusion
Sometimes I look at things from a different angle,
Seems like an illusion
Like writing a life story and not
Knowing where to start from
Is so much to it
It's like a book an just adding chapters to it
Life is crazy
You got to dig deep inside and find yourself
It's hard to move on if you don't
Forgive yourself
You can forgive even though it
Might be something you can't forget.
Sometimes you got to just let go
Might feel bad, sad, mad, happy
And not know how to show it.

-Lil Bipp, San Francisco

From The Beat: We know you for who you are both inside and outside of jail and you never cease to amaze us. It sounds like you're learning a whole lot during the time you have there. You speak a lot about forgiveness. Have you forgiven yourself for the things you've done? Do you think it's easier to forgive yourself or others?

It Sucks When You Don't Know Where You're Gonna Sleep

Each day I look at my position and see how far I've gotten through my life. With so many positive people in my life, it makes a difference. It's a struggle to go through life with no support.

In my younger years, my mother and father were incarcerated for many years. The only really big support in my life was my brothers and my homeboys. I could remember being hungry, freezing cold, depressed, angry, because my own family kicked me out.

Me and my brother were homeless on the streets for a long time. See, it sucks when you don't know where you're gonna sleep at night, going from house to house, asking for some love. I feel for all those people with no homes that are just trying to get by. I wish I could help them out. Damn, Beat, that's all the time I got. To all the homeboys, stay up.

-Raul, Santa Clara County

From The Beat: It makes us sad to think about you (or anyone) having to live on the streets, not knowing from day to day where'd you'd be when night fell. But it makes us truly happy to see that you not only survived what no child should have to survive, but you have become a strong and loving young adult who cares about others. We are glad that you finally feel that you are getting the support of others that you lacked when you were a child. If you help yourself out of this situation, then you will be able to put that wonderful heart to work helping those who "are just trying to get by." Your future is going to be so much better than your past!

My Little Bad Habit

VoiceS coming at me sideways
thinking im'a punk.
She 'bout to hit the curb sideways
she betta jump
I keep my feet steady
my fist on the air
got a ponytail holder
holding my hair
people crowding around me
my ears get red
I think fast...
She charges at me
a scratch to my nose
I fling at her with my fist
pow
side shot
she's grabbing my shirt
trying to take it off
I lose balance
we fall
I'm on top of her
punching her
she flip's on me
giving me two to the face
my brah brah breaks us up
her face messed up
I spit on her face
we charge at each other
she got a hold of my hair
I scratched her left side and the fight was done
I won.

-Luvonica, Alameda County

From The Beat: You create an excellent piece of violence. You take us into the world of a fight between you and another girl. We feel the hair getting tugged, the scratches to the face, and the rolling and punching while on the floor. Only word that truly speaks to this piece is "ugly." Your title makes us think that this is who you are when you are free, a fighter. Why? Are you ready to hang up the gloves? Hope so.

See, it sucks when you don't know where you're gonna sleep at night, going from house to house, asking for some love.

Save The Beat!

The Beat should not be shut down. It is a very disappointment that they had to cut the staff. All the juvenile halls should give The Beat big grants or donations. Most of the detainees love The Beat. It helps us express ourselves and to tell others what they can do. It gives us a lot of support and internships for juveniles or adult parolees. It's a good place, because a lot of jobs don't accept criminals. The Beat welcomes everyone in all races, color, sizes, etc. it should be expanding and the only problem there should be is shortage of staff, so more people will be hired! Save The Beat!

-Lil' Eric, San Francisco

From The Beat: Thank you for your fabulous support. You've already been an intern for us at The Beat, and when you're free again, we hope you'll come back and work with us.

The Cell Phone Photo

If I could hold on to one photo throughout this so called journey, (from jail to jail, group home to group home) it would be a picture of me and my boyfriend who is currently in Martinez County Jail.

It is of us sitting together with grins on our faces. Not smiles, but we both look content and happy.

It would be so meaningful to me in the system because it takes away from the loneliness of our cold concrete cells and it gives me hope that someone wants me to make it out.

Not all if us have a boyfriend or girlfriend who is waiting, but we all have someone, whether it be mom, dad, brother/sister, or even just a friend.

Missing him is what keeps me going. If it were not for him, I would not be pushing so hard to get home. He is my strength and at times, the only thing I feel that there is to live for. He has saved my life on a number of occasions and he doesn't even know it.

That picture is also a memory of a happy time so when it gets rough here, I can close my eyes and imagine being there again. I would do anything to have that photo. It is in my cell phone that my probation officer took when I got locked up, but the photo is still vivid in my mind. So for now I guess I am carrying it with me on this journey.

-Frankie, Alameda County

From The Beat: Excellent on-topic piece! We can vivdly see the photo of you and your man. Well we hope the two of you can get your lives together so you can make it out to the free world! Once you get home, what's the plan besides your boyfriend?

Inspirational

I know someone that wasn't exactly incarcerated, but she wasn't completely free either. When I think back now in a way she's helping me a lot. She told me her experiences when she went through the group home transition because I'm going through some of the same changes. She said it was nothing and that I would graduate the program easily, but something deep down in my heart makes me fell so scared and nervous.

I really believe in myself now that I think back at her inspirational lectures. She said don't trip, you'll get by perfectly fine. Now I'm thinking, she did it, why cant I?

-Carmen, San Francisco

From The Beat: That's the power of building positive relationships, they just influence more positive out of us as individuals. Do you believe that part of receiving information is being able to give it? Could you write us exactly what she told you about this program, so we can publish it and other people will know too?

How Can The Incarcerated Help Each Other?

Everybody here has a story, a beginning when things were simple and a life leading up to mistakes, failures and successes. So mine started like this...

I stepped out into the cool winter air, lit a cigarette and stared down at the light snow covering the off green grass lining the edges of the sidewalks in the apartment I was at. I pulled the cigarette out of my mouth and exhaled. I couldn't determine where the smoke stopped and my breath on the cold morning air started.

I sipped my rum and coke, but couldn't figure out why I was there. I remember the events leading up to my incarceration but not why I did these things. Not for sure anyhow.

The only thing I can remember about the rest of this night is lighting up cigarette after cigarette. My nerves are shot. When I woke up in the morning I have the taste of cigarettes and rum on my breath. I have a black rag tied around my right ankle and when I take it off it reveals a bloody gash in need of stitches, well in need last night.

-Nick, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: In the title "How can the incarcerated help each other?" It was unclear in your story on just how the incarcerated can help each other. Unless as you stated at the beginning how you recognize your mistakes, failures, and successes'. One thing to remember, alcohol is a drug, and to some a poison. Learn from your mistakes and failures and excel in your successes.

I'm Starting To Like School

What I'm writing about is myself and others. See, I made a couple mistakes in the past, and now I'm locked up. Now I'm trying to get my life together and get all my schooling and other education I need done. Without an education, you can't get nowhere in life. I'm starting to like school and am going to stay in school until I graduate.

I have a family that cares about me and wants me to stay in school, to be something in life. I love them and miss them, and I'm going to take their advice, because it's best for myself. I hope to get out soon, so I can get back into school and get my act together.

-Cortez, San Francisco

From The Beat: We feel like education is vital to a person's survival nowadays, so it's a relief to witness how motivated you are to go to school. What high school are you going to when you get out? Are there ways you can educate yourself while in there so you can be more prepared when you go to class on the outs?

The Reach Of A Voice . . .

Ruth of a beautiful sky that's sinking through my eyes,
On my knees everyday from my stressful life cries.
Recreating my life so it won't be a code,
Reforming my heart to loving from cold.
I'm sharp as a needle that's injected through my brain.
This is my life or death I claim.
Friends dropping like flies because of their system-mind,
I'ma reach for the sky and just claw.
It's a dirty life that we spend time doing wrong,
Fought like hell to get away from those white judges with those ugly tones.
Change your mind-system so you'll no longer be a system dog,
Hopping around everywhere like a damn frog.
I'm dead to my community and need to be real,
'cause I done wrong: steal, rob, sell drugs, and attempt to kill.
I need my people to find faith, faith in me to do right,
I'll stand on my grounds with faith and fight 'em down.

-Lil' Papa, Alameda County

From The Beat: Your words ring with liberation and freedom from the ills of your community, we cannot wait for you to take action in your life and show your family and your community a new Papa is in town, a young man who is ready to make a difference.

What's up Beat!

Well still in this max unit thinking about what's to become of me when I hit the outs. I mean am I going to stop banging? Hell no, I'm in it for life, but I am going to think about what to do to help me stay out of trouble.

I'll probably get a job and start this little rap thing. But let me give you some real top-notch game. If you gon' bang, stay true to what you bang 'cause I see a lot of youngsters you know, new bootie bangers. It's crazy, there's a lot of perpetrators out there. I'm just sayin' you need to check yourself, think about what you're getting into. You know life is too short not to do anything with it.

Since I was ten I was bangin', it's my life so be real 'cause if you ain't you gon' get killed fast.

-Nightmare

From The Beat: You have no doubt you are going to bang for life, yet you are going to think about what to do to stay out of trouble? You can think until you who knows when, but it is the action of the positive thinking that is going to save you. Sadly, many of our bad asses from the hall don't get the wake up call until they are in a prison cell, or should we say when all options have run out, why wait? Isn't this bad enough? As for being true to bangin' even the true die. Don't be a fool!

Reality Rhythms Of My Words . . .

My elbows and knees keep on popping out of place,
Affected by this earth that's nothing but a case.
Shaking against my own will from my harmful words,
Considering my life, crossing overseas like birds.

Sugar's sweet as dozens of soft candies that's sweet,
Like many men's hearts that act too hard to be.
I limit my words so I can make it to see my reality.
Put rhythms to your words that what you speak flies like balloons,
Somewhere down the road it will die soon.

Another day to life maybe promise to be that day,
To change everything and just take it all in runaway.
Colors shapes is a view that you remember from years,
My day will come soon to fall out and drop dead my dear…

-Lil' Papa

From The Beat: Your poetry is very complex, and we say this with great respect and admiration for your work. We truly enjoy your thoughts/words. Unfortunately, we do not always have the time to truly attempt to understand all the work submitted to us, so with that said, educate us readers, as to what it is that inspires the poet in you.

!One Photo!

If I could hold on to one photo while on a long journey, would be a photo of my mama and she means the world to me… we have been through thick-and-thin, but no matter what she has stuck by my side.

I love her so much, even though I don't show it as much as I am supposed to, but no matter what I go through or what I have done, my momma knows that I love and care about her very much.

Also the photo wouldn't just be any photo of my momma and I, there would be a nice background of us at a very nice place and a big smile on our faces while the photo was taken, the photo shows that were havin' a good time! That's a photo that I would take and carry with me on a long journey- I MISS YOU MAMMA

-Lil' Mona

From the Beat: Oh you do a great job in informing us of the photo that means the most to you. We think most reading your piece would agree that a photo of mom is as great of a choice as any! Now tell us how you are going to show your love for mom when you return home!

Passion with Pull

Bricks walls and a stone door stops my movement to my high strong fest,
I'm the young man that the dictionary tries to call a beast.
Streetwise also school smart too
Yellow followers and also baby blue.
Rainbows cover my mind into a different scene.
I have gotten red roses with empower roses that's green.
Transform violence, and love that's willing to heal my pain,
Rhythm of life will tell you the same.
So reach to that woman you love and will do anything for to keep protected.
Ride it out with her through rough times that y'all facing.
Tender, sweet as a baby that's passion,
Love that woman without tough grace and rhythm balanced by a pragmatic compassion
Shoulder to shoulder through electric setbacks,
Hold her hands and teach her the delights of your loves and lacks.
Introduce a dynamic voice for those who are young men
With a future and goals transform to your plans.

-Lil' Papa

From The Beat: How do you define yourself? Why would the dictionary define you as a beast? Do you have something to do with this definition? Tell us about the colors you speak of in your piece. Absolutely, love will heal all pain, always does. As for your woman, is she still a part of your life? Could you understand if she chose to leave you? Regardless you have to stay strong in building for a better future. Think big! Think beyond what has brought you to such a place.

Freedom

In my opinion I don't believe many females in the hall are very supportive at all. When you stay as quiet as I do its because you tend to observe before you conversate. By being around mostly all of the young girls in the unit I have found out that they're not on my level, and if they ever are it wont be for years. This is why I wouldn't even seek advice or support from any of the females in the hall. Wonder why I'm so quiet? Think about the phrase if you have noting nice to say don't say nothing .

-Nicole

From The Beat From your observation, there are not many supportive girls? Why do you suppose there girls are not on your level? What is your level? What makes you so much better?

Late Night Thoughts Working. . .

I'm looking at you from my seat and she hella fine,
Her eyes are sexy ones of a loving kind.
She got my lungs and heart jumping all over this club,
I came here to party but I ready to pull off with you to have fun.

Making eye to eye contact while I'm dranking my Remy.
As I can see her body saying lil Papa come and get me.
But I'm knowing I gotta play smart on my toes,
While we both alone behind those doors.

My head is spinning around but still on my game,
'cause anything can happen while I'm wit' this pretty young thang…

But I have a good woman at home,
Waiting on me with my son all alone.
Now I'm thinking smart: it's time for me to leave.
I'm going home where I'm feeling safe so I can take her love and receive.

-Lil' Papa

From The Beat: Although this is only a poem/a dream, you think wisely of how cheating can screw up a good thing in the end, like your good woman at home and your priceless role as a father. Stay honest and faithful if you don't want to lose a good thing!

Money

Root of all evil
Loved by all
Hated by God
Live wit' it
Live wit' out it
Money rules the world.

-Elisi

From The Beat: Money is a crime, it plays a huge role in our lives, it is up to you to learn how to work hard and legitly for it.

In My Eyes

You look into my eyes that's not the key to my soul.
I cry every night which is some thing I bet you didn't know.
You supposed to be a mother
insisted you should be a friend
but mama friends don't leave friends hangin',
you left me to this cold world.
I Guess I got this 'till the end.
You see I'm trying to go a different path
you see I finally met the Lord.
It's people like you that Satan's in
that try to get me going,
going back to being old lil' me
fightin' females on the strip
Dropping fools
going dummy.
But see, I ask my Father every night
to bless all people like you
'cause my Father can't nobody see and he ain't had sex with you.
My Father wants what's best for me and if I'm blind, he'll touch, I'll see.
You be looking into my eyes like that is the key to my soul.
I cry every night for you witch is something I bet you didn't know.

-Erica

From The Beat: You deliver a power piece towards your mother, and where is she today? Is she in your life? Or are you better off without her as you move down a healthier path? How did you meet your God? What do you have in store for yourself given you have chosen a new way to live? Tell us your plans!

Goin' To Camp With Programs In Mind

I don't know where to start, (that's why I wrote this first line.) Well I finally got sentenced. The judge sentenced me to go to camp. But it's coo'. Camp is just gonna help me a little bit more. When I get down there, I'm gonna get into as many programs as possible.

For three reasons. One, so I can learn as much as I can while doing time and not just wasting time. Two, so I can be able to make a career out of what I learn, like doing a construction program, so I can do that for a career. And last, so I can make time go by quickly and keep myself busy.

Well. I'm happy to say that I'm getting' out of this place, 'cause I can't stand this food, and I FINALLY get to hug my mom and have a contact visit. Also I get to see my brothers. So, I'm just gonna knock this program out and learn from it and just move on with my life. And no! I'm not gonna run. PEACE.

-Juan

From The Beat: Doing programs and getting involved is a must! Don't be a chiller, chillin' will only cause you to miss out on plenty. Keep focused and don't have to pretend you are somebody you are not. Who cares what folks think of you!

Love

I could have one photo to carry with me
it would be a picture of me and my ex-boyfriend Jaron.
That picture makes me feel good every time I look at it.
It shows me and him holding hands at the transit center
I really love him still and I wish I can see him.
I want him to understand how he made me feel
so confident, no matter what.
He made me strong, even when I feel so weak.
If I could go back I would in time
I would never broken up with him.
That picture really mad my day,
when I look at it.
He was the only one there for me when nobody was.
I just wish we were still together.

-Jamicia

From Beat: Even though he is an ex, obviously he gave you something special that makes his picture still one that you cherish. Can you tell us about the relationship the two of you had? What are the chances of making it work again? Would he be open to this possibility? If not, what must you do differently the next go round?

Touching My Heart In Soul Part #5

For a long time I been nothing but a big shame,
I use to blame my environment but it's me I name.
Stuck on nothing but stupid for doing stupid games for show,
Thinking everything cool until I open my door wit' a blow.
Police kicking down my door with guns just for me,
This ain't the life I want my lil brothers to see.

Tears roll down my face from the look of my mother,
She's mad but all she can do is hug my lil sister and brothers.
So I'm walking out the house wit' shame of going to jail,
Really from bringing this on my family to be the ones witness this painful tale.

Hurt deep down in my heart to be another dead one to my streets,
Living by that code "you don't grind then you don't eat."
Now I'm doing time away from everybody I love,
It's part #5 leaking out my pain of blood...

-Lil' Papa, Alameda County

From The Beat: ou deliver a very touching poem here for all to absorb. You feel the intense guilt for putting your family through the pain of your poor choices. Only you can hold onto that love now that you have it and move on and not worry about the bull shhh that surrounds you. Peer pressure is a part of the system, so don't let it suck you up! Stay focused on what means the most to you.

One Important Photo

If I could have one photo it would be of my whole family because they are the most important people in the world to me. I would do anything for my family including giving my life. A lot of my family I see a lot but some I rarely see or talk to. My mom, brothers, sisters, grandmas, grandpas and aunties and uncles are the ones I talk to and see the most. I would keep a photo in my room or wallet where I can see it everyday and think about them.

My mom visited me every visiting day in Juvenile Hall, my sister, brothers, grandmas wanted to visit me but only mother and father can visit. I love everyone that cares and loves me too. I told my mom to take a hundred dollars out of my money jar for Mother's Day. I will give the same amount to my mom's boyfriend because we care for each other a lot. My sister brothers and other mom including grandma is going to visit me when I get out. I will love them my whole life no matter what happens.

-Max

From The Beat: Maybe when you get out you can make that photo happen. It's so important to let those special people in your life know how you feel, and telling them how much you would love a family photo would be one way to show them.

The Case For Faith

I was mad and didn't care about nothing and was just going to my court dates waiting to get transferred to a different hall. It was my first time up in juvenile and my PO recommended a release and the judge said no.

The following Wednesday, my mom brought me a book that changed my mind set. It's called, "The Case For Faith." It helped renew my faith in God and I recommend this book to everybody who has lost it. God bless.

-Capone

From The Beat: What a wonderful story, both of your mom's belief in you, and of your willingness to open your heart to a renewed faith in life and in God. We hope that this experience will continue to bring you and your mom together

A Better Life

I wish life could just be non-violent environment of everybody just posting and having fun. So many people would be way more happy if you could just not have to fear getting shot, robbed, or beaten. I don't fear those things, because I get down, but I do know people who do.

Someone has to take the initiative to stop the violence. Don't people wish they could go to a function without being shot at or worrying about funk. This should give you a new perspective on life. And hopefully it will.

- Positive Vibe

From The Beat: Maybe the person who takes the initiative will be you! The next time you're at a function, with a few close homies who feel the same way you do, maybe you can take steps to keep the vibe positive and prevent some violence from happening.

Time

When we are locked up it's all about time. So when you do the crime, get prepared for doing time.

You are timed for eating, you only get like fifteen minutes for every meal, showers we only get five minutes, when we go to school we only get a fifty minute period, and at school we suppose to have breaks, but our breaks be locked behind our door without no outside air. I know when we on the outs we never go to sleep at 9:00 and have to stay in a room until 7:00 in the morning. So if you don't like time don't be stupid and do the crime.

-K-B

From The Beat: You dropped some knowledge here that hopefully a youngster or two will read and learn from. You don't get any freedom when you're locked up. And guess what? Prison is about a million times worse than juvie. No crime is worth giving up your independence for.

The Family Photo

If I could hold on to one photo on my long journey, I would choose to hold on to a photo of my family. I would want a picture of my whole family including me as a teenager. That means the age I am now with the rest of my family.

The reason why I want this picture is because when we get older, we might choose to move out of the state, so I'll have it for a memory and in case something happen to one of us being away for along time I could be like "Look! Remember this picture when we was young"? That's it.

-Zuko

From The Beat: You should do it! Remember this idea of yours for when you get back on the outs, and make it happen!

Hey Beat

Hey Beat, how you doing? This is Raskal,
I'm doing good, top citizen, just waitin'
on a interview for a group home and my P-O.
So I'm just chillin', hanging like snot.
One good thing is I got a visit on Mother's Day.
It was good. I apologized for all
the bad stuff I did in the past and
told her I am gonna try to change
my habits and she said she'll change hers too.
So I just wanna thank you Beat, couldn't do it without you.

-Raskal

From The Beat: Thanks for the shout-out and the kind words! It's hearing things like this that really keep us going. We are happy for you that you have this opportunity of a fresh start with your mom.

Am I doing time by myself?

I think I'm doing time by myself, but at the
same time, my family is doing time with me
mentally, 'cause my family stresses about
me while I'm in here. 'Cause they can't see
me, I know they miss me a lot and I miss
them too, but I understand that I be
screwing up a lot and my mom tells me
when she's mad at me, "watch when you're in there,
I'm not going to go see you!" but she always do.
That's why I hecka love her.
This my eighth time in this hole and I know for a fact that it's my last time
I'm going to Oregon and live over there and I'm gonna go to school and get a job
So yeah, yo boi Chuckie is out till next time!

-Chuckie

From The Beat: Who will your support system be in Oregon? Is your mom moving there with you? If you have already been in juvenile hall eight times, you need to have a serious wake-up call in your life. Right now, you are on the fast track to giving up your life to the prison system, unless you change your ways FAST. Your first job is going to be to find a mentor in your life (could be an older sibling, relative, your mom, or someone you can get hooked up with through school) to help you make some big changes. You can't just keep saying "yeah, this will be my last time in here."

Grandma's Photo

If I could save one photo while I'm in the hall or when I go to placements it would be a photo of my grandmother 'cause she really sick right now, and it would make me think about her before she got the way she is now.

My grandmother is 90 years old and she took care of half my family. She is an extraordinary woman to me. She lived a great life and to me, she should be given an award for all the things she has done. She even is a co-founder of a big church in Oakland called Brook Game. She has did so much that we first took for granted, but now I realize how important she is to me and my family. So that is why I would get a picture of my grandmother to save.

-B-Money

From The Beat: Thank you for honoring your grandmother in the pages of the Beat. She is an inspiration to us all. We hope that you will get to see her and tell her how much you love her very soon. Maybe you can even show her your lovely piece about her in the Beat!

My Last Memory

My last memory was when I came to jail and like two weeks later when I got my phone call I was talking to my sister that's when she had told me that my friend Lil' E just got killed for walking down the street going to the store for his aunt. He got shot in the head for mistaken identity. When I heard that I started to cry when I went back to my room that night and was thinking about it the whole time. Like my friend just really got killed. R.I.P lil E!

-Lil' Marie

From The Beat: Why is it that so many young people have stories just like yours? It's just so sad to see so many kids killed over turf—it doesn't make sense! We're so very sorry that you had to go through all of those feelings while being locked up and away from all of your loved ones. The time is now to pick a new route to live your life in Lil' E's name!

Man, Here's A Family Pic!

If I could bring a photo -one photo- while on a long journey or through incarceration, I would bring the family pix. Because there ain't nobody gonna come through for you but the family, and nobody gonna come visit you through incarceration but your family and they are the only ones that's gonna support you through all the stuff that we young people go through.

Like my mom, she understand everything I've done to get in this system.

Another photo I would bring is my baby mama because we been together for about two years, going on three years on September fourth, 2007. I really appreciate her

for all the bull shhh I put her through. Man, I really regret putting her in her situation

I put her in, but yet she still loves me and that's tough love.

Another photo I probably bring is my grandma, my moms mom. I really

loved her. She has done a lot for the family. Given me more money than I will ever see

legally, and she's been a role model for my mom, her sister, her brother.

-Thizzy

From The Beat: You have written some beautiful and thoughtful words about three very important women in your life who have sustained you through their love, loyalty, and resources. Thank you for sharing your memories and gratitude. We look forward to reading more from you about how you plan to honor your family, by changing your ways and preparing for your future, when you get out of juvenile hall.

Paint

"Don't paint yourself a different color for anybody!"

This is a metaphor that should be use by anyone throughout the entire system. This metaphor "paint yourself a different color," simply mean pretending to be somebody you're truly not.

From my personal experience I'm asking any and everybody to at least try not paint yourself a different color for the next person just to fit in with that person along with whoever he/she hangs out with, because you either begin to hate yourself for trying to be someone you're not, that person finds out you're a fake or that person might just betray you and leave you hanging…

-Blick

From The Beat: And who is the real Mr. Blick? Describe for us readers who you are and where you come from? Who educated you on being genuine?

When I Turn 18

Well, I turn eighteen next February, and I plan on really taking responsibilities as a man. I'm too old for the kid shhh so it's time for me to start acting like a man. I don't want to be a grown man depending on people. I want to be dependent on myself.

-G-Stacks

From The Beat: This is an honorable and achievable goal. Will you be returning to school when you're back on the outs? Getting a job? Is there somebody in your family or in your neighborhood that is like a role model for you?

My Puzzled Life

My life right now is like a puzzle I have most of it done but I'm still missing some pieces. It's almost as if I'm falling into Wonderland and don't know where my stop is. I feel like I'm God's little project, watching me as I throw my life away. But I don't want to continue this, I want to make the best of it.

-Hernan

From The Beat: You use some great metaphors. Can you describe how you would want your life to be in a metaphor? Have you seen many things in your young life? As you go through life do feel yourself growing? Becoming more wiser?

One Priceless Photo

I would have a picture of my family because I love them so dearly and I need something to remind me that they're always there for me no matter what.

Family is what keeps us strong and the bond never breaks or torn apart. I just wish I had a portrait of everyone: my mom, dad, sisters, brother and grandparents (both sides). We are like glue, we stick together no matter what. It would be nice if I had a picture of them hanging in my room and in my room in the juvenile hall it would remind myself that they got my back and I got theirs. My family cares a lot because they also visit me in the hall. For a parent to come and visit their child means they love you. If they didn't then they wouldn't come and see you. Most of the time they come.

For Mother's Day I drew my mom a flower on a colorful sheet of paper. I also try to call both of them for a while on the phone. As for the picture, I always want to remind mysefthat my family supports me 100%. Also, the picture I'll look at it and imagine what we did together.

-Damian

From The Beat: We love the metaphor of your family being live glue, and we are always so glad to hear from young people who feel the love and support of their families. It's pretty obvious that any family would rather not show their love by making a visit to the hall, and we wonder if you can imagine them one day visiting you somewhere else, like college maybe.

Grandpa's Photo

The photo I would take with me is of my Grandpa. I'd pick my grandpa because he's the only one who really cared about me and if he was still alive I probably wouldn't be in here. My grandpa always took care of me when I was little. He always got me what I wanted and when were bad he would help me. I'd bet if he still was alive right now I'd probably be home right now playing games or going outside to play football or baseball.

-Brandon

From The Beat: You're so lucky to have had someone in your life who obviously cared so much for you—a lot of people miss out on ever feeling that kind of love. How can you live in a way that would most honor your grandpa and the love he showed you?

What Is On My Mind

What is on my mind is to get out of juvenile hall and do right and make my mom happy. I want to do right in school and get my life on track and get my education, so I can go to college then look out for my mom, sister and brother. I do not want to come back to Juvenile Hall because it is not cool in here, this shhh is bullshhh and my mom is doing what she can for me, and I want to get on and do right.

In this is on my mind.

-Darnell

From The Beat: That was a positive mouthful that you just spat out. It sounds like you really want to do right when you get out. Don't forget the pain that you're feeling right now and when you're back home with your mom use it as an incentive to never feel the pain of incarceration again.

Coming up to Camp

Beat I'm in Camp Sweeney right now. And I just did a month already and started to get my home passed. That month went by real fast, because we mostly rec all day after school and on weekends too.

But Beat just to stop by and let y'all know about Camp Sweeney: If you do good you can probably get out in six months, but if you start to get write ups then you start to lose four hours off of your home pass so if you have an eight to eight, on your first home pass, then you get a write up then you have a 8 to 4. So don't get no write-ups OK, Peace Out, Beat.

-Dudie

From The Beat: Thanks for passin' the advice on to the next crew coming up to camp, we're sure it will be appreciated, especially if that person is open minded to advice.

Why

Why did it end up like this
Why did I have to beat up that innocent person up wit' my first
Why did I have to end up in jail
Maybe 'cause I was on the out's raisin' hell
Why is it so much drama
'Cause they got stupid baby mamas
Why do they got to make jails
'Cause people think it's they job to raise hell

-Tyrell

From The Beat: Can you answer your own questions? How different are you looking at actions now? Can you still see yourself doing the same thing?

My Love For You

The day you got shot the day I cry
The day they kill you I want to ask them why
But I can't because I might die
that is why I pray an ask God why
I know you not in hell because you was not the type of guy
to lie, run or steal
I'm trying not to cry
R.I.P to you a thousand times.

-Feeling pain

From The Beat: This is such a moving poem, and it tells such a sad story. We hope you find a way to talk to someone, maybe a counselor, about what you are going through and how to deal with it—and keep writing about all of those feelings.

My Life Right Now

My mom didn't want to pick me up for home visits on the weekend because last week I got real drunk and threw a fam party at the house.

I'm also mad at this county BS 'cause they tried to say that I was not home when they called. They called me and hung up! I called them back and they said I wasn't home, so I'm very mad right now. So now I'm jurt tryin' not to run. But I'm gonna do my best to do this eek ass program.

-Jrc

From The Beat: First, congratulations for not running, and for writing about being mad as opposed to whaling on someone or something. Second, why would you disrespect your mother's home by throwing a party there? What were you thinking? We ask because we just don't understand – is it too hard to resist the temptation? Are you trying to impress your friends? Are you secretly trying to get yourself in more trouble?

A Photo of the Love of My Life

The photo I would love to have with me would be the love of my life: Mark. It's a full body photo of him in a white t, jeans, black cap and some roca wear jeans. He was lookin' oh so good. The reason when I would have taken this one picture is because of the memory of all our intimate conversations. Just lookin' at his amazing picture brings back all the times we spent together and all the times he said he loved me. He makes me wanna do right.

Because of him I wanna get out the system and better myself, not because of him – but because of me. He brings happiness to the room. I wish I could have seen his picture before I committed my crime. I wouldn't be in the situation I'm in now and that's missing him!

-Rina

From The Beat: It's good to hear you have a love so strong, but we have to cut some descriptions of this person, which leads us to wonder – is he living his life legit? Or is he connected to trouble and jail and breaking the law. You deserve better!

Finding Trust

From my experience in juvenile hall the majority of the inmates are just bringing their peers down. But there is always those few that are there to help and support you when you need it the most. But I find that type of friendship very rare. But it is a very special thing to find.

-Dean

From The Beat: That's real, true friends are always hard to come by, especially where you're at now, but at least you have the state of mind to know the difference between a friend and someone who's just going to bring you down.

POWER

The power of thoughts is a very good story. It could be good and it could be bad - the power to think comes out by actions. The first thing you think when someone hits you is 'drop 'em' right but you don't think about the consequences -- like death, jail, or something more

'Cause there are a lot of people get mad when you whoop 'em and wanna shoot a person you can think so much that you know a lot.

Sit back and observe things and think.

-Lil' B

From The Beat: Have you ever acted first, thought later? Or the other way around, have you started practicing thinking or taking a few breaths before acting out?

Why Bullets Flashing at Me?

Beats with my heart girl, sexin' feelin' the sheets
Sleep with a piece 'cause ninjas walkin' the streets
I ask when I meet why bullets fly flashin' at me
Pass out before I sleep, so I can get deep in my dream
Get off yo' knees my, kid' inside her stomach it seems
This is the life of a Ninjas's American dream

-Lil' F

From The Beat: The way you describe it, this smart short poem makes it almost like the American Nightmare. First you're with your girl and it's kind of good, next you're in a war zone. Tell us this – is this "American dream" you write about one that you chose, or one you just got caught up in? What can you do, or have you done, to get away from those flashing bullets? One thing, put down the gun regardless!

Thoughts

My thoughts take me anywhere I want to go.
I see myself free or with my loved ones
my mind can imagine anything.
Let your mind wander and maybe you can be free in your own mind.
Only you can think you're locked up forever
but you'll be out soon 'cause the longest prison served begins with the first day.
Peace and stay up.

-Elisi

From The Beat: You definitely have a gift and the strength to escape the horrors of incarceration, but do you have the strength to live a life free of the system? Do you have the strength to follow your dreams for a better life?

My Baby's Photo

If I could hold a photo it will be my baby's picture, because he is my everything and he is my happiness, that's the only way other people can describe something about me is so hard for me and this times because I'm doing time without the other part of my heart so I feel like I'm dead losing my head because I don't know nothing about him, to hear him call me daddy or even a smile on his little face, I need him but I have to get through this time here.

-Angel

From The Beat: When you think about holding your baby's picture do you think about doing better? Will you make him your priority when you get out? What is some of your plans with him and for yourself?

Advice for Anyone Coming Up To Camp

What's good Beat? Me nothing, just chilling in camp, about to get my first homepass. When you here for a week, after that time pass, when you were here for a week, after that time pass by quick. So if you ever come up here just pimp this and be legit. At least is better than the hall, you don't have to be surrounded by walls, or get big ass county draws.

-Akar

From The Beat: Appreciate the advice, maybe when you get out you should write to the BWO with some suggestions for how to make it and be successful on the outs!

How To Beat The System

The people incarcerated can help each other by talking about their experiences, and making a plan for when you get released and going to church and tellin' yo' patnas to be cool and not fight and stop talkin' when talk is dead.

-Lonnie

From The Beat: This piece is great, but you'd better keep it quiet! That much co-operation could break the system in two because there'd be no one to mess up and do dumb crimes anymore... In your experience, would you say that there are people up at camp who are helping each other out the way you describe?

My Thoughts

I'm always thinking all of the times. Sometimes I wish something does come true but it ain't happen, I always fail because I get trouble or missed certain times but I think hard.

I was trying to become a real hustler when I was 12... I learned myself from movie and from people who already are hustlers I listened very carefully to hustler tell me a lot of rules about how to protect themselves and get away from cops, and many hustler help tell me words like "never snitch when cop look for you!" I've keep my word from them.

One time cops were looking for me and said that I was a witness of gunshot scenes. Cops told me it's will give a good trust of them and they will give me a lot of privileges. I still refused them their offer. And cops get mad tryin' to threaten me to tell them who was the suspect. I told them "I don't snitch"

The cops gave me up and let me go. It's my power of thought that I'll protect my homies no matter what. Nothing is gonna change.

-Dizzzy Birdman

From The Beat: What you write about here is loyalty... and loyalty is a good thing. But you used those "powers of thought" to absorb the code of this gang when you were only 12 years old and didn't really understand what you were getting into. Now you are practically a man, and you know a good deal more about the world than before. Isn't it time you used your power of thought to move on from these self-destructive decisions you made when you were just twelve years old?

My Friends Encourage Me

If I could hold onto one photo while on a long journey it will be a photo off all my friends. The reason I would choose a photo of all my friends is because they mean a lot to me.

My friends have always encouraged me to keep playing sports. They always told me that my dreams would come true and will make it to the pors in football or basketball.

During my long journey I will pull the picture out, and I would have a great story to tell about every single one of my friends in the picture and how they have had a positive influence on my life. I think without my friends I wouldn't be the great person I am today, that's why that picture would be so meaningful to me.

-Terrell

From The Beat: What a great shoutout to the positive influences in your life.

Do My Time

Doing my time in Camp Sweeney it really ain't anything
You gotta do the program because most be frontin'
I ain't gonna run again 'cause I learned my mistake
So I'm gonna do my time so I can shake and bake
And when I get out I'm gonna be coo'
'Cause I ain't tryna eat that nasty ass food.

-Lil' Bill

From The Beat: Shake and Bake? Look, we respect your desire for freedom, and we truly hope you achieve it, but if the first thing you can imagine doing is illegal (unless we're getting "shake and bake" wrong) – then how soon before you start doing OTHER illegal things, and end up right back here, miserable and homesick and possibly facing a worse case?

It's Hard

I just don't know what to do.
I feel like giving up
sometimes I feel like staying strong
I just don't know
I just hope to get out and be with my family and girl again
To live strong and live right.

-Jesus

From The Beat: We want to tell you first that to never give up! Don't even entertain the thought. How can stay strong? What can you do to keep your self from feeling like giving up?

A Photo of My Daughter

If I was to go on a long journey of whatever, and only was allowed to bring one photo, it would have to be a picture of my "daughter!"

She's not here now but in a couple months she will be. But I would take that picture because she's my everything and will always be, sot that's the picture I will take on a long journey with me.

-The Finest

From The Beat: Congratulations! We would love to hear all the ways in which knowing you will be having a baby girl has been an inspiration to you. What will you need to change about your life? What are your hopes and dreams for her future? What do you most look forward to?

Need To Stop

Well Beat, I been coming to jail for at least three years and now we are at the new Hall. It is a whole different experience. I am tired of coming to jail and I don't want to come back to this one so to all that if it's your first time to the Hall let it be your last, because jail is for nobody, from my experience.

My advice to you is to stay out of jail and stop doing bad things to come here.

-Ryan

From The Beat: We hear you Ryan, this is terrific advice, but how, that's the question, isn't it? Do you have a strategy/plan/blueprint for the big HOW?

I Am Really Upset

...that I'm back in Juvenile Hall. I had gotten a release and before I could make it out the front door I got into it with my parents and my reactions was not very positive. I even threatened to harm someone and myself so my PO made me stay at the hall and me go to John George's Mental Hospital. I am very calm about the situation and hopefully when I go back to court the judge will let me go home because I didn't really want to harm anyone.

-George

From The Beat: We hope it all works out for you, not only that you get out of jail but also that you get help figuring out how to work with your family and emotions so you feel less pain.

The Corner

I sit on the corner, watch my block bleed
Split my swisher up and roll up some good weed
Gotta get that gwap so dopefiends I must feed
This block I post on is filled with dirty deeds
At times it's all money at times it's all drugs
But regardless what it is the block is filled with thugs
It's no love in my hood, no kisses and no hugs
But lotta money floatin' here so my folks they on dubs
Well I guess it's go time, this hall shhh ain't funny
I got caught for going hard and a lil' too dummy

-Lil' Gumby

From The Beat: Do you have hope for your streets, for yourself? We hope you're not also caught up (mentally) in the messed up system of street glory? Are you? Or does the wiser half of you know that, like you say, it's "no love" there.

What Other People See

When other people look at me I know what they see because I see the same thing they see when I look in the mirror. Other people see an innocent, friendly, smart, healthy, and handsome young man. If not more things I like what I see, I like the look that other people see, it's just what's on the inside. I hope no one can see. I don't know if I say the wrong thing or do the wrong stuff, maybe some people just have a gift because only a few can see inside of me. I hate the inside of me, I hate what certain people can see inside of me. Even though they may be right, I still deny what they see.

For the people that can see in side of me you would want them to see love, hope passion and a lot of good memories. I wish they can come tell me one day that my mom regrets what she did or my dad wishes that he could've done right. But I know that day will never come, because they can see on the inside and see the reality. I want to do right and do something positive in live but in order to do that I'm going to have to change the look that's inside of me.

-Doug E. Fresh

From The Beat: That last line – which you yourself underlined – really set us up for your next piece, the one where you describe that look inside – what it says, what it sees, what it's seen. Would you do that for next week?

Helping Each Other Mentally

The way the incarcerated can help each other is by helping each other mentally.

They can also lay down the rules of the stuff to the new people, tell them how things go so it can be passed on. They can also make peace with everybody so that since is no drama. Keep their mentality strong So that they cause no problems that would keep them in any longer than they want to be. Also helping them, school and basics

-Quos

From The Beat: We get the feeling that if everyone followed this prescription, Juvenile Hall might actually turn into a place where young people with troubles might get helped!

Dirty Test

Because of a dirty. I though I was going to be released but I was wrong. Well other than that it's just another boring ass day here at camp. We're getting a lot of people up here, so if you're coming up here, don't run because it's easy and that's what they probably want you to do.

-Grim

From The Beat: If they want to keep you down, why do you let them? Why do you play into their hands by your poor choices? Wake up!

Thoughts and Wishes

The power of thoughts is unimaginable. I wish it was true that the power of thought can cause wishes to come true. Because when I see the judge tomorrow and I'm able to get out, then I believe, I believe you can wish for something so hard and have it come true. I would believe in miracles.

Though I do believe you can do whatever you want as long as you put your mind to it. One person can make a change -- like Martin Luthor King.

-Quoc

From The Beat: True, putting your mind to your goals means something real. Do you have specific goals you intend to put your mind to? What are they?

The power of thoughts

What is the power of thoughts? To me it is the way someone thinks. How someone expresses themselves in their thoughts. The mind is a powerful thing. It can make you strong or it can break you. It depends on how you use it.

While incarcerated, being in a room locked up it tests you, being in that mom you think a lot. You think of everything, every little segment of your life. In that moment you may just lose it, or you might just gain more insight to who you are within.

You have the power of thoughts, the ability to think and act according to your thoughts. The ability to think positive when you are in a rough situation. You have the power of changing the mood of the situation just by thinking. The power of thoughts it's a powerful thing.

With it you can change your life or ruin it.

-Eric

From The Beat: In your own life, have you been trying to teach yourself to think positive when in a rough situation? Has doing that worked or helped?

The Photo I Would Take

If I had one photo to have on a long trip, it would be one of my, my mom, my baby mama, and my daughter, because they are the most important to me because she helps me through all of the problem I have to go there. And my baby mama she is always there for me through the bad and good. Then there is my lil' girl that means so much to me, so that is the one photo I would take.

-Ryan

From The Beat: Just reading this description gave us a strong sense of the love you feel for your family... we hope you get to be with them soon!

I Love My Family

Well Beat, the one picture I wish I could have on a long road would be a pic of my mom, my lady, and also my sisters. That pic would help me so much. The reason it would help me so much would be because when I am locked up or locked down, I can always picture my family how they are in that pic instead of me seeing them sick or hurt.

I would just like to see them smiling because when my family is happy, I am happy, no matter what happens to me. Yeah but the pic would be my sisters, my mom and my lady, all together smiling. That's just the best thing in the world because I care about my family more than myself.

So anyone who calls me selfish is a lie. Anyway I wrote on the topic and I hope you like it, because that came from The Beat Within Me.

-Shadow

From The Beat: This isn't the writing of a selfish person at all, but the writing of a loving caring soul who wants the best for his family. The good news is that you have the power to make these people happy, the power to make them keep smiling: All you need to do is live a good life, and do your best to take care of yourself, your education, your future.

A Family Photo

One photo that I look up to is one photo of my family. I wish that we could be together, and the photo would show my family and me all together smiling and happy. But now I am here and I can't be with them because I'm in here, and they are out there in the real world.

I've been away for five months and it's been a very long time since I saw my brother and sister, and nephews. Now I think its time that I bring every thing that I'm good at, and experienced out, so my family and I can be together again.

The photo I would want in the long run is of my family, so I can keep it close to my heart. My family means the world to me more then any thing that is valuable to me. If I could have any thing I would have my family, because I miss them very much. I would be with them if they gave me a chance. They are the most meaningful thing in my world.

-Aaron

From The Beat: If your family is every thing meaningful in your life then it's time to change. You need to start thinking of your brother, sister, and nephews and how they look up to you. It's easy to say this about your family while behind bars, yet when you get out is this what you really think about? It's time to make that change, but most of all keep that picture close to your heart.

The one photo that I would take with me on a journey is a photo of my girl and my sisters and my mom and dad, and that's all on one photo.

My Thoughts

Thoughts,
thoughts
lead to actions,
actions lead to habits,
habits lead to character.
Thoughts are most powerful.
They come from the most powerful weapon,
the mind.
Control your thoughts.
They lead you any where and every where.

-Tb

From The Beat: Thoughts are powerful; they can take you any where. But in the end you will have one of two out comes, one of delight and happiness or one of misery and sadness. Use your "powerful weapon, the mind". Avoid the latter and put delight and happiness in your life.

A Photo Of Love

The one photo that I would take with me on a journey is a photo of my girl and my sisters and my mom and dad, and that's all on one photo. The reason is because I love all of them the same and that photo will help me get through a lot of stuff that I have on my mind because I've been away for so long.

With this photo it will make me feel like I am at home with my girl and family, and that makes me feel like I don't have any problems in my life. With out my photo if feels like I have all the problems in the world and the feeling is not the best feeling in the world, so I think you guys get the point that I am getting at. My family means the world to me.

-Vincent

From The Beat: Your point has been made, and it's good that you hold your family in such high regard. There are many young adults that feel just the opposite. Hold that photo tight, and every time you walk out the door with your friends think of that photo, and know you'll do right so you are not taken away from them or they from you.

The Pic

If I had a choice between what pic that I would keep, it would be a pic of my homies, and my family altogether. All the homies chuck'in a deuce just kickin' it all flossin' and standin' next to the brown candy paint caddie, my best home girl standing next to me and my brother Jg. We're having the time of our lives ghost ridin' the whip and my mom arms out in exception, smilin' money mouse buckin' up to the camera. Dd the name mad loves the game.

-Deshay

From The Beat: It's good to have a picture of friends and family to reflect on. It reminds us of who we are and where we come from, but most of all they bring us happiness.

My Family Picture Is Universal

If I went on a journey
it would be world-wide,
everywhere from Mexico to Brazil,
from Hong Kong to Jerusalem
every where.
I would always carry a picture of my mom,
my sister, my dad, and my girl friend
all standing on a hill top plateau.
With sky high pine tree forests,
boulders the size of Volkswagen Bugs,
and sand the color of caramel.
So that no matter where I go; I'll always remember
where I came from, the small town in the East Mountains.

-Codi

From The Beat: Enjoy that journey world wide, and keep that picture close at heart. As you said, always remember where you come from, and that small town in the East Mountains.

ARIZONA

For Me

Pain it comes and it goes but for me it seems to want to stay
What can I do? What can I say?
Sometimes I get mad, sometimes I pray
My heart is burst
but worst I am living life cursed
My heart it's been broken
Sometimes I wonder in my mind if I was the one who's been chosen
Struggles they come from time to time
But for me I am struggling inside my mind
For me things just didn't go out the way they did
I guess I just had it bad when I was a kid.

-Estephen

From The Beat: Your emotional pain spurs you to ask many questions about life. Continue to ask the questions and don't give up until you find the answers you need. The relief from that pain comes from within when you are ready to use the resources that are available to you. Are you ready?

All Alone

I have no home
I'm all alone
I feel like everyone I loved was
never there
I'm feeling scared
I feel like nobody wants me around.
Loneliness is what I found.

-Estephen

From The Beat: Sometimes we act in a way that alienates us from the people around us. We may fear being vulnerable and risking rejection. We can let in who we want. Is there anything you do that alienates or pushes others away? Are you willing to take the risk to open your heart to be loved by others? Who do you want to let in?

Don't Get Left Behind

Man today I saw my mom she told me about the shhh that has been happening around my house. I felt hella mad because I couldn't do anything about it because I'm in here. I hate this shhh. Look let me tell y'a something when you get out try not come back because in my eyes my life is passing by and I'm stuck in one spot and cant get out so if you get that chance or that second change do it right don't get left behind.

-Mejia

From The Beat: Now that you are on the inside looking out you can see just how important your role is within your household as well as how powerless you really are in this matter at this point in time. Nevertheless, this doesn't mean that you never will be able to make a change. It's clear to see that you are concerned about the well being of your family structure and this is this comes along with be being a responsible young man.

I Refuse To Let This System Drown Me

What's good wit' Da Beat? It's that hot boy Iggs, ya dig? But, yea, man, I'm still in this mousetrap. Yea, but the judge had gave me a home pass for Mother's Day, so that was coo'. Man, doe, I'm gettin' tired of this weak-ass system. It's a cycle, fa' real. I should be out of here in a few, so I'm a just keep my head up, eyes open, and stay focused, 'cause I refuse to let this system drown me and have me washed up on the shore. But, hopefully, this will be my last week in here. But, yea, Beat, I'ma see you in a few hot ones. Take care.

-Iggus

From The Beat: We're guessing part of it has to do with the system and another part of it has to do with something else. What do you feel like you have control over? The system, your family, yourself? Would it be wise to focus on things we have no control over, or would the smarter decision be to maneuver things we can control?

This Don't Help

Well, I'm here at Log Cabin and I really got to thinkin' 'bout things--like the Ranch ain't changed nobody. Most of the people leave here and end up goin' back to get killed. This shhh's like a curse. But keep it real—being here only makes us miss the 'hood more. It makes no sense. How you expect to hide someone in the middle of the woods and then send them back to the neighborhood and expect something different? It's like teaching a penguin how to live in Antarctica by sending him to Africa. It makes no sense. Most people are up here, puttin' on a show, just waitin' to go home. And now it's a year. It's only worse than before. Keep it real—don't nothin' change but the time and the place.

-Birdman

From The Beat: All incarceration can offer you is a time out from your regular life and a chance to think through what you're doing to yourself and to others. Any changes you consider and make can only come from within you. You sound like your life in the streets still calls you and is luring you back there. What could or would have to happen, to convince you to develop your talents and direct them beyond the streets?

A Place Called Heaven

I want to say I love you big bra. I miss you to this day. I remember when we use to play fight on the block, and when we use to have water fights. I miss you so much you didn't have to go but now you are in a betta place, I use to always tell you to be safe standing on the block, and you would always say alright little bra. I remember you use to tell me to go in the house when it got real bad on the block. I love you Big Bra.

-Young David

From The Beat: It's sad that your little brother passed away, but what we find exciting is all the great memories you have of him, especially the water fights. We're sitting here right now baking in the office on a beautiful day and a water fight sounds perfect. If he could still talk to you, what do you think he'd say?

I Want To Go Home

I want to go home but I need people to help me to get out of here, but I don't want to stay here for a lot of days. But my family want to pick me up, but my whole family cry about me in here at YGC. But I have to go home in never do wrong thing again. Please help me get out of here. Please help me get out of here, please. If I go home I am never do wrong thing again. I will be a good boy. Are you going to help me get out of here at YGC?

I want to go home. But I stay here is very cold and sick. Can you let me go home? I will be a better person. And I will never doing something wrong again. I come this one time only. Please help me get out of here. But my family feel sad or mad. But family want to pick me up and go home. Please help me get out of here at YGC. I don't want to come here an' sleep, but is very cold and I feel sick. I feel sick now at my nose. Who can help me get out of here at YGC?

-Kinson

From The Beat: You've been cold ever since you went to Unit 3, Kinson. That isn't fair to you. At least you have another sweatshirt and more blankets now. We can feel how you want to go home with your whole heart. When you ask, "who can help me get out of here at YGC," do you get any answers? Do you think that some of the help has to come from you too?

One Photo

If I could have it, it would be a picture of my grandma, because she was the biggest role model in my life. If I had one more chance to see her, I would not know what to do, because ever since she past, my life been kinda off da wall. If my grandmother was here, I highly doubt I would be writing in this newspaper — not that this a bad thing, but I probably wouldn't never (have) caught a case in the first place.

-Swiss

From The Beat: Your grandmother must've been really influential in your life to keep you from getting a case in the first place. Is she still with you in certain ways? Like, do you have good memories of her? What are some of these memories? We hope you can continue to push forward even in your grandmother's physical absence.

When I Get Out

When I get out I'ma be a different person, totally different. I'ma do my group home for 6 months and get out a probation go to school finish high school. I get myself strait take care of my mom. I ain't gon' let people be like lets go do this and that. Naw, I'm koo, I'm done of doing stupid shhh.

-Lil' Mike

From The Beat: What an intelligent decision to make! If at first you don't succeed, dust yourself off and try again or in your case, try something new. How many credits do you need before you graduate? It's wise to not let people influence you to make the wrong decisions. How will you stick with that when you get out?

Helping Others

Incarcerated people can help each other in many ways by avoiding all the bullshhh that goes on far as females being messy talking behind each other back. They can also help each other by helping whoever is lacking in the program far as not getting there stuff together and neatly tell each other right from wrong support them if there down and help them to not come back to jail.

When it's school time they can support each other stay out of the negative crew or from negative energy they can also pray together and think about what they go do to stay out of trouble and move on with their lifes and get a job and stay in school. Jail isn't for any human being but if a person has did a serious enough crime like murder they should be arrested other than that people need to fight to stay out of jail.

-Ebbie

From The Beat: You've said a whole lot of great things, do you help others when they're in need? In what ways do you help others? What would stop you from helping someone else? Can you remember a time when someone helped you out personally? Did you return the favor?

One Photo

If I had one photo, I would have picture of the one I dream about. It would just be her in the outs with all her friends smiling wearing clothes and everything. If I had that picture right now that's all I would need to help me through my long journey in here. It also means a lot to me to see her smiling having fun and making the best of what she's got even if she may be in a bad position now. All I need is that one photo and it'll make me really happy.

-Chowsee

From The Beat: It must be nice to have someone other than family out there waiting for you. We wonder if you appreciated her this much when you were out. Do you think you'll feel this way towards her for a long time? What about her and her picture would make you very happy?

Where I'm From

I am from a place where there is killings everyday. I am from a place where dope is slang. I am from a place where people fight over words. I am from a place where young people don't play. I am from a place where it is not good to walk around at night. I am from a place they call war zone.

-Young David

From The Beat: It sounds like you're from a pretty dangerous place. Do you feel like where you're from had a part to play in where you are now? If so, do you want to change where you live? If not, what's attracting you to such a dangerous place?

Why

Why is life ripped of fire flames
Why is my cry tears full of pain
Why is feeling and emotions so blue
Why is my life full of warm water
Why am I who I am
Why me in life-time
Why am I living in this type of world
Why isn't my father in my life
Why is I'm here breathing
Why am I loved with fearness
Why do I have ownership
Why was I born
Why do I have anger problems
Why do I have brown eyes
Why am I planning to do right
Why am I a good student
Why did my loved ones past away

-Yung Breezy

From The Beat: These are great questions to ask depending on what your answers are. Do you feel like you need to find the answers to all these questions? We hope you don't overwhelm yourself with too many things to deal with at once. Do you feel like it's wise to handle one thing at a time?

Squires

To all the OGs in jail like San Quentin—I've been to the Squires, like, a month ago. I can't wait to go next week. It's been interesting talking to the OGs. They really changed my mind on how I look at them, like I used to all them "lifers" and "no life," but a lot of them got a lot of knowledge that youngsters need to learn. We need to change the game. We need to stop the violence on our parents and innocent kids and people. Put your family in the situation. You want people to respect yo' family, so why shouldn't you?

-Lifer

From The Beat: It's great that you now respect yourself more 'cause of the teachers in SQSP. What have they taught you about life, that you didn't already know before? Your family probably needs your help too. What suggestions do you have for anyone, including yourself, to stop the violence?

This Violence

There's gang violence everywhere
From there to here
Asian chill with Asian
In the whole world's nations
Black chill with Black
Killing each other with gats
White chill with white
Rep your turf with all your might
People using guns
You think it's fun
People that use guns are scared
Toss one if you dare
A baby could pull a trigger
Taking someone's life is no better
Someone's life is not replaceable
You can buy chairs, clothes, jewelries and tables
Hope you solve your problem
Instead of fighting to the bottom
Negotiate straight to the top
Don't even try snitchin' to the cops

-Chinatown Kangaroo

From The Beat: So what is your solution? You write that each race hangs with its own, but nowadays isn't it true that you all go to school, the mall, the movies, live around young people of every race? Do you have relatives, homies, girlfriends, neighbors from races other than your own? You're missing out on a whole lot of good times, just plain life, if you don't give everybody a chance to change your life, and to get to know you.

My Baby Picture

One photo I treasure is my baby picture--when I was one year old. The picture shows me on top of an ox statue. I treasure it because it's priceless. If it's destroyed, I will go on one. Knock on wood. But, yea, I only have a couple of them, so it's special to me. Everywhere I go, I would never forget them.

Other photos I treasure is of my family. I don't ever want to forget them. They the only people that give a damn about me.

-Lifer

From The Beat: Why do you suppose your parents took a picture of you as a baby on an ox statue? Were you born in the year of the ox?

One Photo

In that one photo I would have my family, my girl, on a nice background and I would have a nice frame. When ever I feel down or just want to see my folks on my journey to where ever I would just look at the one and only photo, and that one photo will make me feel better, but where ever my journey is to hope it's a good one too. I hope this will be a good journey

-Man Man

From The Beat: It would be nice to have such a photo that can brighten your day no matter where you're at, wouldn't it? What do you think your girl or your family would want a photo of? We're guessing it's you, so let's do them one better and get out to stay out so we can give them the real life thing.

Appreciating The Beat

Que onda, Beat? This be Termite coming from that U7. Well, I'm still up in these bootsy-ass halls. I thought I was gonna be released, but forget it. I'm still savving it out.

I just wanna say thanks for coming today because I know you guys don't hear that every day, especially from our unit because these punks always be acting up like j-cats. But yeah, all is highly appreciated. So keep yo' head up and stay up. A'ight then, late.

-Termite

From The Beat: Thanks you for thanking us. You're right, we don't often hear that, and we do appreciate hearing it. But the real thanks go to you and the others who put it down for The Beat week after week. Without you, there would be no us.

I Believe

If a man did bad most of his life and nobody knew how smart he was but he didn't let them get to him and he kept doing good to show his talent and got his life together and made something of himself and he showed them people that he can make good from bad so is it possible u tell me. I know it is because I'm doing it.

-Lil' Nephew

From The Beat: Sometimes we must be strong and believe in ourselves before others will believe in us. And we're happy to hear that you're believing in yourself during these hard times. How do you wish people will see you? If you live the life you want to lead, what will people say about you? It sounds like you have a strong passion to do better, so we're sure you'll keep your head up in the face of adversity...

Crazy In Love

While in the halls
You think of it all
Wishing I could have you
I hope you feel it too
This love gone wild
I won't live in denial
Got caught up together
Can't see you whenever
Hopefully I can see you soon
Holding in tears unlike a monsoon
We will be together in a while
Can't wait till I see you smile
Hopefully you still the same
Don't ever forget my name
You know who you are

-Baby Daddy Termite

From The Beat: It's sad to us that you something was more important to you both than just being with each other. Whatever brought you in here together meant more to you than staying free, and that's something to think carefully about when you talk about love. If you don't want to be writing sad love poems to someone you can't be with, then you both better figure out a way to change those things that give the system the power to separate you. Now's the time to think about it. Are you?

The Power Of Thoughts

I have a lot of thoughts when I'm in my room. I always in my room thinking about freedom and all the good things I could be doing if I was out

-Tito

From The Beat: What good things do you think about doing when you are free?

One Photo

My little momma and my girl because I would miss them the most. Family wasn't there for me so they would be all I have, and Kodak memory is a great thing. It stays with you as long as you keep it

-Marcus

From The Beat: When family is not there for you, then you have to recreate your own family. And make sure you are there for them!

How Can The Incarcerated Help Each Other?

Gives people the time to think about when we can get out, what we can do to prevent coming back, or what we could have did. But most of the time people don't be thinking of what they be doing instead of being in here, like a job or school, or at home with family and friends on the block. I don't change because I know I get money on the block and my job.

-D-M

From The Beat: Are you thinking of a job or school while you're in here? You say you don't have to change because you have money and a job, but did you have money and a job before you gave away your freedom to this place? If so, then those things may not be enough. You may want to think about changing some things in your life... the things that let the system take you from it.

Back With A Plan

What it do Beat, ya feel me? This Lil'D-Studda, dat border boy, ya dig. I'm back in these punk-ash halls, but this time I got a plan to not come back, ya dig. I'm shakin' fake ninjas off like dreads, and I'm finna knock this year out on the Ranch. I'm knowin' I'm good 'cause my lil' brah up there, ya feel me like.

But when I get out, I'm finna sign up for SSI, get tatted up and get ma gold one. And I'm finna go to college wit' my girl. But I swear I'm finna have five kids as soon as I touch down. Then I'm movin' out of San Francisco to a better place to raise my kids because Sunnydale ain't the place to raise my lil' ninjas.

But on some otha, they tryna play me. It crazy. These group homes can't control a young thug like me so they say, "You goin' to tha Ranch where it ain't easy to run." But I'm down below ya dig I'm outro. Holla back.

-D-Studda

From The Beat: We admire your goals — especially to go to college and move out of the city. But there's a difference between goals and a plan. You haven't given us a plan, yet. For example, have you finished high school? If not, how will you go to college? And what is the basis of that SSI you hope to get? Having five kids sounds great, but only if you can care for them and provide for them. If you have to risk your freedom by doing illegal things to put food on their table, and if they then have to grow up without a father's guidance, can you really call yourself their father? If group homes (or whatever) "can't control a young thug" like you, then what will control you? And if the answer is, "Nothing," then maybe it's time to rethink your "plan."

Missing You

Missing you everyday and every night
You're all that I think about
That gets me through my time.
Wishing I could see your face
And hold tight
Never wanting to let you go with all my might
I pray to god before I go to sleep
To give you a sign to let you know that
You're always on my mind
And I'm missing you all the time.

-Ashley

From The Beat: Awe, that's so sweet... Who are you missing all the time? If you dig deeper into that mind, could you find an explanation of why you love this person that could create more lines? What about this person allows you to sit for an hour and write a poem about them? It must be a blessing to have such a special friend.

One Photo

One photograph I would take on the journey with me, wouldn't be a photo. I wouldn't have to worry about losing it because it would be memories of my past. Memories of the good times I had when I was free would be the photo I take on my journey because it will motivate me to get back on that end, and do my time not be on the run so I ain't got to keep using them memories to do my time ya dig? But that's it.

-JR

From The Beat: A lot of people said they would take photos of their family or their girlfriends/boyfriends on a long journey with them. But your perspective is an original one and we like it. What are some of those good times that you remember from the past? We'd like to hear about them.

The Power Of Thoughts

My power of thoughts takes me to a world where I finished school, get my diploma, get into the industry of doing construction work and plan on building my own home with my family and just living life good and happy

-Jay Pitt

From The Beat: Without this power of thought, you could not accomplish these goals. But with the power of thought, they are all within your reach. Besides "thought," what else are you doing to make these thoughts a reality?

One Photo

If I could bring one photo with me it would be one of my little sis, but she not so little no more, so I mean my younger sis. She been through a lot with me my whole life. From deaths to being split up in group homes, to being back to living with each other. She is someone in my family that I respect and love a lot, who would get me through my time. So I can go back and look after her and make sure no ninjas messing with her. But yea, that's who I would always look at

-Rakee

From The Beat: Being a male, you could probably give her some insight as to how males operate so she will be better equipped in dealing with them. What can you tell her from a male's perspective about how to deal with males?

How The Incarcerated Help Each Other

They could help each other by showing each other the ropes. Tell them the rules so the staff won't get on them. Try to help them instead of trying to start problems with them 'cause everybody already stressing, 'specially in maximum security. Everybody being closely watched and in here for serious crimes, so that means they are fighting serious cases.

-Lionel

From The Beat: How do you help other young men locked up with you? When you first came here, did you find the kind of help you write about? Do you think people in here help each other more than people out there? Why?

How The Incarcerated Can Help Each Other

The incarcerated can help each other by not influencing each other into doing the wrong thing. Like getting into gangs or doing stuff that could get them more time. But what they really could do is talk stuff out before it gets too serious. But that really all you could do.

-Squeak

From The Beat: We like your suggestion to talk to each other and calm each other down before things get too serious. Is this something you have done? Has anyone talked you out of things you wanted to do, but are glad now that you didn't do them? Like what?

My Imagination Takes Me Out Of My Cell

As I lay down I use my imagination to take me out of my cell into a world I create with my mind. I see myself five years from now as a Fed Ex worker with no kids and a loving wife.

-Zoom

From The Beat: Imagining yourself free, with a good job and a good wife, is a great beginning for that future, which is within your reach. Besides picturing it in your mind, what else are you doing to prepare yourself to achieve it?

Anger

Anger is something I can hold
It burns so hot that it melts gold
When you feel it, you feel your blood boil
Every punch you throw will recoil
It makes you wanna beat somebody to the dirt

-Azen Boi

From The Beat: Very interesting. What else can you do with anger besides hurting someone else and yourself with it?

Help Yourself

Being incarcerated could keep you alive, but it really could change your life for the good or the bad. But when you make a change, it could help you in the long run. When you want ta really help yourself, keep yourself around positive people. You're going to do positive things.

-Fred-dro

From The Beat: Do you really want to make a change? Do you want to do positive things? What do you have in mind? What changes (sacrifices) will it require you to make to bring about these positive things?

SANTA CLARA COUNTY

A Photo Of Nine

One photo that I will have is the one photo of my family all nine of us. I remember that photo the day we took it, we were all happy because that was the first time we been together in a long time because we are either locked up or on the run and don't want to be with each other or we will get caught. I hope that we will soon be back together all of us.

-Taz

From The Beat: Do your part Taz in saying out and hopefully the other family members will do the same! One family, one love!

My Daughter's Picture

The photo I would hold on to is my daughter. So through this journey in this system I can take a look at my lil' girl and know that I'm not supposed to be here, my place is with her. Now she's one year old, I'm happy but also my heart is torn apart for the reason I've never been there since she was born. I been in and out of the system and now I'm more mature and this is getting old, and I tell myself that with my daughter is my home.

-E

From The Beat: Oh we hear you E, we hope her picture and you knowing how much you screwed up will be the key to changing your thoughts and living a healthy life with your daughter, who needs her daddy more than ever!

Bad Choices

I feel like my family don't like the thing I do, but I end up doing it anyway. So by me coming back to juvenile hall, they really taught me something like how to focus. I never wanted to go to school but in here there is no option, so they really woke me up because now I want to do things I never thought of before like getting a job and trying to graduate on time because I don't have no type of credit.

-I'm awake!

From The Beat: Getting in focus is a huge first step, good for you! Capture the dreams you have for a better life and watch your family and yourself find great satisfaction and pride in your new choices!

One Photo One Family

If I can take one picture with me everywhere and anywhere it would be a picture of my family. I don't even need to be in it, I just want to see my family because I miss them and care a lot about the. If someone tried to take my photo that would be the last photo they ever tried to take.

-Black-Mike

From The Beat: We hear you loud and clear. Family is special. We hope this is the last time you find yourself so far away from their love and support.

I Pray

Let us pray
Lord I pray for my family. My mom and my sis
I pray to use my head instead of my fists
I pray to think nice thoughts instead of bad
I pray to be happy instead of mad
I pray to have wisdom as much as patience
and an eye for Satan for he has many faces
I pray that my mom will stop being depressed
I pray that my mom will stop being stressed
I pray that you Lord will heal my sister's tears
and I pray that you Lord will heal my sister's fears
I pray that they know that I love and I care
I pray that they know that they're in my prayers
I pray that the world would not be so corrupt
I pray that Satan would just give up
In Jesus name
I pray
Amen.

-Piglit

From The Beat: Praying to your God is good. Thinking and sharing kind words towards your family is loving as well as praying that you live a better life. Praying is good, but also putting your words into action can help out tremendously and it might even lift the sadness and pain your mom feels. You have a hard road ahead, but it's something that can be achieved.

Thoughts Can Control Your Life

Thoughts is so powerful
Powerful enough that can control your life
It could be good or it could be bad
You just hope you get good
Because the bad will mess you up

-V

From The Beat: If you know (through your thoughts) that "the bad will mess you up," then don't you have the power to think in a different way, in a way that won't mess you up? When you think about your own future, how do you see it?

Just Read This

Well, my topic for today is what to believe and what not to believe. What I mean by that is that the whole court process is playing with my feelings. They keep changing their minds. Now just because they don't know what to do with me, they are going to send me to Preston CYA, the end of the road. It first was Alternative, but I got denied, then Ranch, but I've been there too many times. And then it was hall time, but the judge wasn't rolling wit' that. And now they ain't got no other choice but to give me the last on the list.

I never thought I was gonna end up in there, but, hey, I ain't tripping. I chose this life but they could have told me from the gate, instead of messing with my head. You know what I got to say about that? Don't believe nothing they say about what they giving you, until you get sentenced.

And that to all you out there waiting... nothing is more stressful than being up in this shhh here, so don't trip. Get out and party like a freaking rock star, 'cause you only live once, so enjoy it to the max.

See you next time, you bunch of Beaters, and I'm out.

-Loony

From The Beat: Sometimes we think you're truly living up to your name. It's completely loony to complain about the system toying with you, or not warning you of the consequences of your behavior, then advocating more of the same behavior! This just tells us that it really doesn't matter how many warnings you get, you'll just keep putting your freedom at risk. Isn't your partying that you enjoy so much some of what put you behind these walls? Do you also enjoy to the max being in the max? It sure seems like that to us, 'cause if you don't, then why do you keep putting yourself here? How many chances do you think the system owes you before you take some responsibility for your own decisions?

The Close Family Picture

If I could only have one picture it would have to have the qualities of being perfect. That means having all my close family in it- my two sisters, my mom, my dad, my grandma and of course my hyna because even one day without seeing her is too much for me. That's why I have pics of her and see them every day and that's what helps me to get through every day in the hall.

-M

From The Beat: Pictures mean the world when you can't have what you want. What must happen for you to return home?

Amazing!

The power of thoughts can be an amazing thing.
Your thoughts are what effect your feeling
it gradually takes effect with your actions.
For example if your thoughts are one of something bad
that might make your emotion angry or depress, t
hat might conclude you to do something negative or stupid.
So that's one power you have, a power to control your thoughts,
which controls your actions.

-Nguyen

From The Beat: Perfect little piece on topic, with a solid example too.

A Meaningful Picture

If I could only have one photo I would have a picture of my family and my lady in it. The picture would have my mom, brother, my two sisters, my two nieces, my girlfriend and my uncle and brother in law. The reason why it's so meaningful to me is 'cause those are the people that mean the most to me.

-Anthony

From The Beat: Must be hard to be without the ones who mean the most to you. What are their thoughts on your behavior? Are they supportive in helping you stay out?

What We Can Do For Each Other In Here

Well to be honest when I first came here I really didn't have anyone to help me, I mean I never asked for help. I thought I could do everything on my own. So as the years progressed I learned the in's and out's of the juvenile hall and ranches and group homes. I thought I was cool at the time, but now that I sit back and think about it I regret it.

I'm now eighteen years of age, and I'm still here. I listen to the youngsters sometimes and hear how they don't care and nobody else cares and how they're going to do this and that. I can't do much about it but I do let them know that this isn't the life to live. I tell them there's plenty of us in here so what they need to do is be out there and at least strive to be better then the rest. And that's just about it, I mean it's better then nothing.

-Robert

From The Beat: Thoughtful commentary you deliver on topic! We like how you gave us a taste of who you were, and who you are today, a young man, much wiser that the boy who first walked into the hall.

My Only Photo

If I was to take a photo with me on a long journey. It will be my mother, because she has always been there for me. She always told me good things and to keep my head up, and to never give up. Every time I will look at the pic I will never give up because that what she told me. So that would be my picture that will keep me up and keep me striving for my goal.

-Guis

From The Beat: Yes, we hope your mom is your motivation to better yourself in life!

Locked Up

Incarceration don't help me fo' shhh, it feels like a waste of time. I could be on the outs dong something fo' my life. I know it's my fault I'm in here but it ain't helping me, feel me though!

Being locked up do give you a lot of time to think I be thinking bout why I'm stuck in here I could be out there getting money kicking it wit my family and eating good food. Sometimes I think I'm gonna change, but then I think I say that every time I come here hopefully I think differently if I get out and step my game up so if I get out.

-Kenny

From The Beat: What do you expect incarceration to do? How should jail help you? Like you said you put yourself in such a predicament. We bet you are pissed at yourself for this. So in your own words tell us why you are locked up? What kind of money should you be making out there? As for changing what will it take on your part? How should you change? Why should you change?

One Photo Of My Family

What up, Beat? It's yo' boy, Thirst, from the max. What's one photo I would carry? Well, it would be a picture of my family. That's one thing I got in my room right now, a picture blasted of my family and my baby girl. God damn, I miss my family. Just can't wait to get out this dump! It's always the same shhh, different day.

Well, for all those people who don't know me, I'm locked up for some shhh I didn't do, and I know you hear that a lot, but it's the truth! Well, I'm locked up in the max and I'm here with two of my boys, and we're hopin' to get out soon! Well, my time is runnin' short. See you next week. Late. And to my boys in here, we will be home soon! Late.

-Thirst

From The Beat: We don't doubt you when you say you're innocent of the crime they put you here for, but we wonder if you are thinking of making any changes in your life of freedom, so that you don't have to end up behind thick walls ever again — whether for something you did or something they think you did. In other words, you have to find a way to take the target off your back so that you can walk through life without fear that the most precious gift you have — being a free man — will be lost.

The Incarcerated Way Through The Struggle

The way to get your mind off being incarcerated is to keep your head on the positive, to pass time. You can be locked up, but don't let the system get to your head. Get through it. Make the best out of it, see past it. It all depends on how strong you are as a person. Learn something, get better in school.

If you don't know how to survive in your stay here, then you damn sure better learn how quick, fast, like Comcast. Just keep it sav, and keep your eye on the swivel, feel me? The system may have your body and soul, but they don't have your mind. It can be fantasizing about something you dream of and I guarantee, you will forget about the negativity.

If you wanna still be locked up, go ahead, act an ass. It ain't gonna do anything but make you angry and more immature. Get your grown man on, work the system. Don't let it work you, because it will creep up on you and you gonna be stuck like Chuck bruh bruh bruh bruh. But, yeah, I'ma tell you like this: keep it PI until you die, and keep it movin', 'cause slow cats get left. Keep ya head up. Take my advice, you will be home in a minute. You did what you did, so, man up. Take what's yours.

But on the other hand, I'm 'bout to scoot out this G thang, so I'm 'bout to make the best of mine. Please believe I gotta get back home to my fam. They call me Lil' Tray. I'ma be home in a minute.

-Lil' Tray

From The Beat: Well, you give excellent advice about how to pass the time while in the system's embrace, but we wish you'd spend as much time giving advice (maybe to yourself) about how to stay out of the system in the first place (or the second or third place). If you'll be home in a minute, what's your plan for staying home? If you don't have one, we guarantee you that somebody else has one for you...

A Very Special Picture

If I could carry one photo it would be the photo with my family the photo would be with my parents my three brothers and my two sisters and me. We took that picture back in the day but that picture is wit' the whole fam bam together, it's a picture that motivates and makes me feel good when I'm feeling down. I would carry that photo with me everywhere. We got it hanging up in our living room it's a very special picture to my whole family.

-M

From The Beat: Nice. Family is number one, now do your part to rejoin the family and not exclude yourself from future family gatherings.

When I Get Out

When I get out of Juvenile hall I'm going to change my life around, first by going to school and getting a degree, then I'm going to try out for either the football or basketball team because I'm trying to make it pro in sports. Also I am going to stay out of trouble because I hate jail, I hate the feeling of being locked up in a small room.

-Oshaine

From The Beat: Sounds good to us. You have your work cut out for you. We hope you get your learn on, as you work towards getting on the sports teams of your school, and from there, all the best!

My One Photo

Of course the only one photo I'll keep is a photo of my lovely family, if I'm going somewhere away from them. It is so meaningful, because having a picture of them brings back all them sad, happy, fun memories, and reminds me of who I am and reminds me if I'm in a bad situation, the only persons that would really be there by my side no matter what, is my family.

So think before you do something, because if you're locked up, your parents would put on a smile when they come and visit you, but right after they leave, you wouldn't know how much it hurt them.

-Unknown Viet Boi

From The Beat: It sounds to us like you do know how much pain you've caused those you love so much. But if the pain you've caused in the past makes you change how you were living — if you truly think before you do something that could hurt them (and yourself) even more — then you will put a smile on their faces that will last for a very long time.

My Grandma's Photo

It's your boy, Richard the Grinch, from the max unit. Well, today's topic is "The One Photo." Well, as I think about all the photos that I have, and that's not very many, I think the one photo that I would pick is the one that has my grandma and me in it, because of the fact that my grandma died on Christmas three yeas ago, from cancer. My grandma was like my mom! She had left me with my grandma when I was young, so my grandma was my mom until she died. Ever since she had died, I've been on my own.

My grandma was my everything, so the one photo I would pick would be my grandma and me, because that picture of her is the only thing that I hold dear to my heart, so that would be the one photo I would pick. So that all for now. Until next time when pencil meets our paper, to everybody reading, keep your heads up. Gone.

-Richard The Grinch

From The Beat: When you look at that picture, can you hear her voice giving you advice about your life? If she is looking down on you right now, what can you do to make her proud of who you are. We know she loved you as much as you loved her, so what can you do for yourself that shows that love?

Thinking On Getting Out

While I am sitting in my cell
I'm just thinking to myself
And in my mind, I need some help
If I can't, then I help somebody else
And in my mind, I see myself moving on
But in real life, I can't make it through the storm
And to me that just feels wrong
But while I'm in here, I'm trying to just stay strong

-Giovanni

From The Beat: What kind of help do you need, Giovanni, and where are you looking to find it? Do you think that when you offer help to others, you're also helping yourself at the same time? Your title is about getting out, but you haven't told us what you're thinking about doing (or changing) when that time comes. Can you share some of that with us?

When I Get Out

When I get out I'm going to get a good job and stay out of trouble by keeping myself busy and staying off the streets and not doing the thing I did before I came in here.

I want to get my own place and take care of my family like they took care of me especially my grandma because she can't walk. I hope this dream of mine comes true.

I don't ever want to come in here again because there's no place like home.

-Paul

From The Beat: Home is where the love and support is. If anything this experience will have a lasting effect on you in a good way, and you'll never find yourself handcuffed or in a cell again. Best to you!!

Power Of Thoughts!

As I sit on my bunk
I think about the funk
Stare out my window to downtown
And see my thoughts go down
All I think about is the darkness
Also, my life helpless
I see everyone dying in pain
Myself being buried in shame
I leaned over to see myself lying so lame
I wish the game wasn't so hard
It's just there like a piece of lard
Sitting, makin' me start trippin'
My life seems caught
I woke up sweaty as hell
Trippin' off the next dream
But it was just a thought!

-Chuccy

From The Beat: Do you have any power to change the kind of thoughts that bring you down? Can you, through thought, transport yourself to a better place, and even to a better future? Are you completely helpless to do anything to change the dark picture you paint here? What do you think this old phrase means: "It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness "?

A Picture Of My Lady

If I could only have one photo it would have to be of my lady, because she is the reason for me wanting to do good so that I can get out and change me life. I would keep it so it would remind me everyday what I am striving for and why I am trying to do a perfect program and also why I am not gonna let anyone mess me up. So that I can get out and support my future wife/baby's mama.

-D

From The Beat: How does your lady now make you want to do good? What happened before? How does one change his/her life? AS for your future, take it one day at a time, before jumping into marriage and a family! Be smart.

The Power Of A Thought

A thought can be very powerful if you put it to play. I thought that if you don't think about court or how much time you're going to get, everything will just go faster. Also, I thought if you read a very interesting book, it will kill time and it does. Thoughts come from thinking; then comes action. That's what I think about the power of thought. Not much, but hope it makes sense, Beat. Thanks!

-C

From The Beat: Yes, it makes sense. What do you like to read that makes the time go faster? Have you ever thought about writing as a way of making time pass? Of course you are writing for The Beat, but what about just writing for yourself, your thoughts, your hopes, your fears... everything.

One Photo

If I can bring one photo with me on a long journey it would be of me my girl and my baby. I would look at it every chance I could get. That would be my photo.

-Ian

From The Beat: Where would that journey be, Ian? If it were too long, your baby wouldn't be a baby by the time you returned.

Me And The Usos

If I had one photo
That one strike of pose
It'll be that one photo
Wit' me and all the usos
Through all the time that we've been together
We held in there, strong, no matter how strong the weather
The photo would be in the 'hood
'Cause that's where it's good

-Tiny Samoa

From The Beat: If it's so good in the 'hood, then why are you here? Can some place that good lead to some place this bad?

Think!

Hey, Beat! This be Droopy in this max unit. Well, I'm in here for something that happened at a 7-11 by my house. If I could, I would go back an' not have did what I did. When you're in the outs, you ain't thinkin' what's gonna happen if you go and jump someone, until you're locked up. Well, I jus' wanna say, "Think twice before you do something" and I hope my friends be safe out there and I'm here.

-Droopy

From The Beat: If you never jump anyone, then you won't have to worry about second thoughts. Sometimes, these "thoughtless" encounters can lead to a lifetime of regrets and "if only" second thoughts. Don't wait 'til then. Think now about how you want to live and stay free when you get out of here!

A World Of Evil And Sin

We live in a world of evil and sin
but it's up to you to find the beat within.
God created us in his image
and gave us two very powerful things –
our souls, and our thoughts –
which can lead us to our goals and our plots
which can lead us to our colds and our hots
our dos and our nots.
He also gave us the ability to control these thoughts.
But since we are sinners with wicked minds
we usually take ourselves through hell, and blind.
And if you want those joyful thoughts
turn your life to the bible before it rots.
I can be in my heart and I'm in paradise.

-Arellano

From The Beat: Thinking good thoughts is a start, but you have to act on them if you want to avoid the plots, the hots, and the nots. By the way, very imaginative use of language.

One Photo Of The Family

If I could hold onto one photo while on a journey I would take a picture of those I care for the most - like my family. But one photo would be tough so I would probably gather a whole bunch of pictures and cut them and create my self a collage of those I care about and take it on my long journey. I know in reality I would never part with those I care for unless I'm gone from this world. This gives me an idea, in case I make wrong choices and end up incarcerated for a long time.

The only picture I'll keep is my whole family and my handicapped nephew. The reason I will keep that is because I love them and I feel bad for my nephew. So people out there - don't do drugs if you don't want your baby messed up.

-Dough Boy

From The Beat: Thanks Dough Boy. This is a thoughtful response. We hope you get it together so that you never have to do a long stretch away from your family.

Family Always There

If I could take one photo it would be of my family. They're the only people in your life you can always count on. Friend will come and go but your family stays with you through thick and thin. With most friends its outta sight outta mind, so once your gone they just forget about you. Family's the people that care about you that feed you, give you a place to stay, give you good advice when you need it and most important love.

-Ghost writer

From The Beat: That's right in the end family is going to be there, and friends, well they have to do what is best for them in the end.

The Power Of the Bible

I use the power of my thoughts to get through the day, by just thinking the randomist things without even wanting to think of them. I don't know, I guess I'm just crazy inside, by the thoughts of life, I usually end up really thinking about life maybe the craziest question with a lot of mystery in them.

Later I started to read the bible and all my questions and thoughts showed up in the bible, but this time they showed up with answers! Now to think of it, I never expected myself to be asking such questions in such quick thoughts. I really believe in God, pretty much, 'cause of the answers I found in the bible were so in tune with my question and my thoughts.

I kept reading the book, asked more question and I even answered them. Later I kept reading the book and the same questions I thought showed up, yet it had the same answers as I!

Before all of this bible reading began I had plenty of wishes, they all became true, but out of nowhere not even expected. Anyways I started thinking some good thoughts about myself, yea crazy but its true, haha. I then read in the bible God is part of us and works in us by faith. then I read it in the book then it started to say something that pretty much meant to say a man with such knowledge is a man with something it's at the tip of my tongue but I can't get it, sorry, so I realized with all those thoughts I had a lot of wisdom, knowledge and I then realized I had a lot of power in my thoughts.

Hope all this makes sense? I mean I hope you have it in YOU to know what I meant…tricky-haha Late.

-Gc

From The Beat: The power of thought is powerful! The bible is a powerful tool as well, and it can be a very useful support during times like this. Obviously you see it that way and we're thrilled that you have been given hope by the word of your lord.

Can Incarceration Help?

It's the Looney one of this Placement Unit. I think the incarceration can help each other because we know what each other are going through. I may have gone through what you are about to go through or the other way around. We can help each other by giving advice to smash on each other, or to do something to extend out time, or push us on C-Level/C-Mod. Well, I don't have any time left 'cause I just got off the phone with my dad. So yeah, I'm gonna gas, brake, dip out. Ya feel me? Hah, just playing.

-Nick

From The Beat: Hey Nick, you listed as many ways that each of you can fuel each others' bad impulses, as good ones. So we're a bit confused about what you really think.

The Girls In My Life

If I could hold on to any picture on a journey I would want a picture with most important girls in my life which are my mom of course, my big sister, my little sister and my lady who I love very much. I think as long as I have a picture of those special girls I'll be alright. Well that's just me that's all I got to say today…Late!!

-Christian

From The Beat: Pictures are powerful, but as for you being alright, it's gonna take some work, what's the plan?

The Power of Thought

What I think about during my incarceration is the things that got me here, and how I wanna change, but most of all the things I wanna accomplish when I get out.

When I get out I want to go back to school and my football team. I want to go to college not state, but city, because my grades aren't that great.

I think I want to join the Navy because I believe it will put structure in my life and keep me outta trouble. I can still have fun with my friends, go out to parties and make bank. In the Navy I want to work on jets, which will also give me a career after I'm done with my contract.

That's what being in here helped me realize; that I want to do something with my life, because I am a smart young man that made a mistake being somewhere at the wrong time.

I was also able to find God in here. I believe He has forgiven my sins.

I try to help other people believe also that they have a future and not to give up. Life goes on and there's people that can help but it starts with you being willing.

-Sean

From The Beat: Excellent piece! You have truly given some thought to your life and what it is you want in order to make it. We hope you get the chance to go to college and play ball as well. We hope if the Navy is still in the picture after college you get in and fulfill your dreams working on jets!

Family Portrait

The photo that I would keep with me through the Justice System would be a picture of my family so I can look at it and every time. I do it I think in my head that I'm gonna get out just to be with them. The picture would have my mom, dad, sister, brothers, niece and nephew in it, showing that they miss and love me a lot.

Well Beat I'm gonna be out,so peace, and I'll hopefully get out soon to go to APA and change my life.

I just want to say thank you to all Beat publishers and I hope that The Beat can keep going. Well that's all I got ,so late and much love to everybody out there in the juvenile hall syatems in the "Bay Area."

-Lil' Tim

From The Beat: Nice Lil' Tim, we too are pulling for you to do right, sounds like you are well on your way to freedom and we'll do our part to stay above the waters.

My Regrets

My name is Luke and I have a lot of regrets. I've been here in juvy two times, and I want to stop coming. Each time I come, it's for the same thing. This isn't the way I want to live. I hope my parents will forgive.

I shouldn't hang out with the friends I have. All they encourage me to do is bad. When I get out I'm going to listen to the people who make me do good. Hopefully, I'll behave like I should.

-Luke

From The Beat: Luke, you know how you don't want to live, but do you know how you do want to live? We all need goals, and plans to achieve our goals. What are your goals?

More Violent?

Are people becoming more violent? Yeah, I think that people are getting more violent, because some people are starting not to care. They don't care how much trouble they get in. But sometimes they regret what they did. Some people don't care because they don't have family.

Another reason they don't care no more is because they live in poverty.

-Antonio

From The Beat: We know it's hard to care when it feels like so much of the world doesn't care about you. Poverty, in a country as rich as ours, is immoral and wrong. In our land of plenty, there is more than plenty of poverty. When you are feeling down and blue, think of the people who really love you. You know they want the best for you. And you know that a good deal of that is up to you. Make the wisest decisions you can, even when times are tough.

Photo Of My Family

A long journey,
a picture of my family.
I need it while I move
from place to place,
while I take on a different pace.
Moving fast,
moving slow,
a photo of my foe
keeps me on track,
shows me what I love.
If I fall astray
I know I have family to stay.

-Tyler

From The Beat: If you find just the right pace, you'll have no foe, at all. But it takes time to find that pace.

Bad Kiss

"I kissed a flame, what did I expect?"
Hot burning reaction on my face.
It's almost like getting slammed in the face
with ten years to life.
I wonder if it's gonna be a permanent scar.
I'm on my way through the firey prison gates.
As I think of it more – I know it's gonna be a scar.
My face is still burning as the time comes closer.
How did I get myself into this situation?
My face cools down.
I can't blame others for my actions.
I'm my own self. I make my own choices.
Where has that led me?
A ticket to the prison walls...
left with a scar.

-Kevin

From The Beat: Well, you've discovered one way to use time wisely. Pencil and paper and your lifetime of experiences. You'll never run out of things to write about. Educate yourself Kevin. Fill your head with useful knowledge. When you get out, you can put it to good use.

Guns In My Life

In my opinion guns don't do anything but cause problems.

I've only seen two guns that didn't belong to a police officer. The first one was a 45 that my friend bought off someone for 20 bucks. He came over one day and showed it to me.

I told him he was stupid for having it, and to be careful. But he wasn't smart with it and he carried it around with him, all the time. He ended up firing at a car and is still in jail for it.

The second gun I've been in contact with was a shotgun. It belonged to the friend of a friend. It was in his home, and he carried it everywhere. I hung out with him for a few times, no problem. But the last time, things didn't go so good. He wanted to jack someone. So he had a friend call up a kid with a lot of weed and tell him that his friend wanted a sack. They were gonna meet up with him. I wanted a pack of cigarettes, so I went with him. Somehow the guy messed things up, and we left. He was disappointed we didn't get the weed, so he decided to break into a store. I told him he was stupid, and to not do it. But he wouldn't listen. He shot the door open and an alarm went off. The cops came, and that's why I'm in juvenile hall.

Guns are stupid things to have, and don't do anyone any good. All they do is get people hurt or locked up.

-Alex

From The Beat: There's a pretty clear lesson here: don't hang around with people who hang around with guns. Your judgment was poor and here you are, in a place you'd rather not be. And it could have been a lot worse.

Pro-Guns

Guns are useful in life because they can help you in the world. If you have a problem, you can solve it really quick by pulling the trigger. Guns are useful if someone is trying to jack you and you have something to back them off with.

Glocks, AKs, 357s, and 45s are the best guns that you could use to lay them on their backs.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: We suspect we know why you wished to remain anonymous. By your logic, the one who has the biggest gun has the fewest problems. By your logic, everyone should be strapped with nuclear weapons. We know you may be trying to get a rise out of us, but guns, and the damage they do, the families they've torn apart, the kids they've killed – that's not a joke to us.

Pillow Thoughts

My head's on the pillow.
I'm having memories of the good times.
But I've got no luck,
'cause I'm stuck in this knot and the clock's running out.
I feel like having a smoke.
I'm in despair.
Nothing's going good for me.
But I know that soon, the rain will clear, and all will be good.

-Juan

From The Beat: You're wise to recognize that there are patterns and waves in life. Everything changes. Good times come and go... and also the not so good times. It's hard to hold on to anything. It's best to be prepared for everything. Change is one of the few things we can reliably expect. But it's all worth it. We're alive.

One Photo

If I could have one photo when I go to the pinta, it would be of all my family at a party, making a toast. Everyone would be dressed their best. There would be family from near and far. My reason for the family toasting is because if I feel down, just looking at a picture of family toasting for good times to come will bring me right back up.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: Our glass is raised to you, Mr. Anonymous. Here's to better times to come.

Daydream

I daydream in my room about all the stuff I want to do when I get out. Some of it is good, like hanging out with my family, and trying to do good. And some of it is crap that could get me locked up again. But I'm going to do both, and try not to get caught up. I need to handle some business. It's a must.

-E

From The Beat: You're telling us that that "business" is worth more than your freedom, more than the love of your family, more than just about anything. We ask you to think again. Revenge is an empty reward, if we're reading you right. You'll get nothing from it but more misery. Is that what you really want?

My Mother

My mother is nice to me. She has always been there for me. And she helps me when she can, for whatever. Every time I have court my mom is always there for me.

When I go to juvenile hall I always miss her because I only see her on visiting days. And when I see her I feel like crying. And she cries. She has always told me not to do bad stuff, and I feel bad because I have disobeyed her.

-Ruben

From The Beat: Ruben, we hear this story so often about sons and daughters with loving mothers who warn them against certain behavior. But the children don't listen, and soon enough, there are tears all around. What would you say to someone who wrote what you've written above. What would be your advice to a friend who is breaking his mother's heart?

Gravity

Gravity's bringing me down.
At night I think about my problems.
Can't get no visits to resolve 'em.
Silence on the phone, every time I call.
Glass breaking in my heart.
Backyard full of worries.
I'm in a state of despair.
Wishing I had someone to give gratitude to.
But these borders aren't letting me through.
I'm hoping I'll get caught in the wind,
find a way out.

-Ers

From The Beat: You are plenty smart enough to know that you have to make your own wind if you want to blow out of trouble.

My hopes include a good job and starting a family. I also wish to do good, but I need to believe in myself.

If I Could See Myself Through The Eyes Of The Cops . . .

If I could see myself through the eyes of the cops I would see a disposable statistic. I would see a tall pimp looking hog. And by the way I walk and carry myself, they would probably see me as threatening. They would see me down to the fullest. They would see someone who looks like he's coming up in the world.

I don't really care what people see in me, though. I've just guessed this from what I've heard others say. All I care about is what I see in myself.

-S

From The Beat: We think you are exaggerating. We all care what others think of us. Even socio-paths care enough about what others think - so they can avoid being caught. What does it mean when you say you are "coming up in the world"?

Daydreaming

When I'm locked up I mostly daydream through the whole day.
I wonder when I'm gonna get out.
I wonder if I'll ever change my life around, or go to prison.
I wonder if I'm gonna survive CYA.
I daydream about my girl.
Is she gonna be faithful, and keep her word.
Well, that's what I daydream about.
These are the consequences of being locked up.
You worry about what's going to happen, and you can't do anything about it. When I get out of CYA, I'm never coming back.
I'm done living the criminal life.

-Kevin

From The Beat: Have you ever tried to daydream about the kind of life you'd really like to live? What's a good life, for you? You have to have your eyes and your heart set on something good and decent. You have to be able to imagine doing those things. We go where we look. As you look into your future, try imaging a good one. Then start imagining what you'll need to do to get there.

The Box

I feel like I'm in a box.
No mirrors,
no windows,
nothing but bricks.
I can hear the wind blowing under the door.
Days after days with nothing to do but time.
Every night I have a dream that one day I'll be out of this box – with a woman in my life, one who I can trust.

-J

From The Beat: That's a good dream. Make it come true.

One Photo OF My Loved Ones

If I could have one photo while on a long journey, I would have a picture of my loved ones – mom, step-dad, brothers, girlfriends, cousins, aunts, uncles. Then I could look at them when I really missed them. This is important because I love them. And love is very important. I don't even want to think about a world without love.

-Jose

From The Beat: A world without love would be a lonely, desolate place. What will you do to make sure the world never runs out of love?

My Mom

Well, some good things about my mom are that she's always been there for me whenever I needed her, like when I was a little kid, when I was sick, or in trouble at school.

Another good thing is that she is always taking care of me when I'm home. She tells me to clean my room.

The worst thing is that she called the cops on me and she has been telling my PO everything I do, and what I have to do.

-Eddy

From The Beat: Sounds to us that you realize she loves you so much she is willing to do very difficult things, like calling the cops and cooperating all the way with your PO. We're glad you understand that she's trying to help you, even when it hurts. Have you let her know that you understand why she did what she did?

My Hopes

My hopes include a good job and starting a family. I also wish to do good, but I need to believe in myself. Sometimes I just watch my tears pour down, but when I hear music, I get my hopes up and I get happy.

-Rolando

From The Beat: So, start singing, and don't stop, until you hear someone else making the music. And if you have to be quiet, listen to the music in your head.

The Power Of Thoughts

The power of thoughts are almost the kind of reality, like we are real and dangerous. But the power of thoughts are beautiful, because your thoughts were that you kissed a pretty girl or when you thought about that, you are not locked up. That's the power of thoughts.

-Barnon

From The Beat: That's true. You can imagine whatever you want and no one can censor it or even know what's going on in your mind

I love Camp Meeker, because it is filled with redwoods trees everywhere and the air is so fresh.

One Photo

The one and only photo I would take is the photo of my loved one—the girl I fell in love with, the girl who tried to help me when she knew I was going nowhere, the one who was always there for me, no matter what. And I pay her back with my love and respect, but I say sorry to her for not listening to her. I'm sorry, and that's why she will be my "one photo."

-Chepe

From The Beat: What is going on with you and your girl now that you are locked up? Has she given up on you, since you didn't listen to her the first time? What is your plan?

My Whole Family

If I could only have one photo
It would be of my whole family

-Trip

From The Beat: Makes sense.

Camp Meeker

Camp Meeker is my second home. I have a lot of friends that live up there. Every time I go up there, there's a party that is cracking.

I love Camp Meeker, because it is filled with redwoods trees everywhere and the air is so fresh. I love going to my summer cabin in the summer, because I bring my boyfriends, or just my close friends up from Novato. It's just a great place to relax and calm my nerves. I also love it because it's close/near Monte Rio Beach. I go to the beach every day in the summer from 1:30 to 5:30 pm. I love the river. Camp Meeker is filled with excitement and fun memories. I've been going to my summer cabin since I was two, and now I'm seventeen. I love my summer cabin and everything about it.

-Love

From The Beat: Camp Meeker sounds fabulous, Love. Will you be out in time to go to the river with your family this summer? Many families from all over the bay area, as you probably know, make the hour long drive to the Russian River each summer be it to Camp Meeker, Monte Rio, Guerneville, Rio Nido etc. We too have some great memories. Good for you!

Getting Locked Up Doesn't Help Me At All

Hi, Beat. It's me, again, I want to just say that I'm getting out soon so I can go home and be with my family and be good.

As soon as I get out, I'm gonna do good and I'm gonna try to stay away from the halls, because I realize that being locked up doesn't help me at all. It just makes me mad when the staff say some things to me, but there's nothing I can do—just wait to next week to get out and stay away from halls and never come back.

-Rivera

From The Beat: If being in the halls has taught you that you never want to go back there, then it's done its job, don't you think?

All My Family

If I could have one photo it would be a picture of all my family, so I could remember about them and be motivated to do well because they have come real far.

-C

From The Beat: How would a family photo motivate you?

One Photo

If I could hold on to one photo, it would be my family and me standing at my aunt's party, because even though I mess up a lot, they always encourage me to try and stay out of trouble. I would have it with me, because it reminds me of a good time outside. It would also keep me from wanting to see them. It would tell me that when I'm done and back, I will have a good time like that. The photo would show what a good time I had and that my family supports me.

-Mick

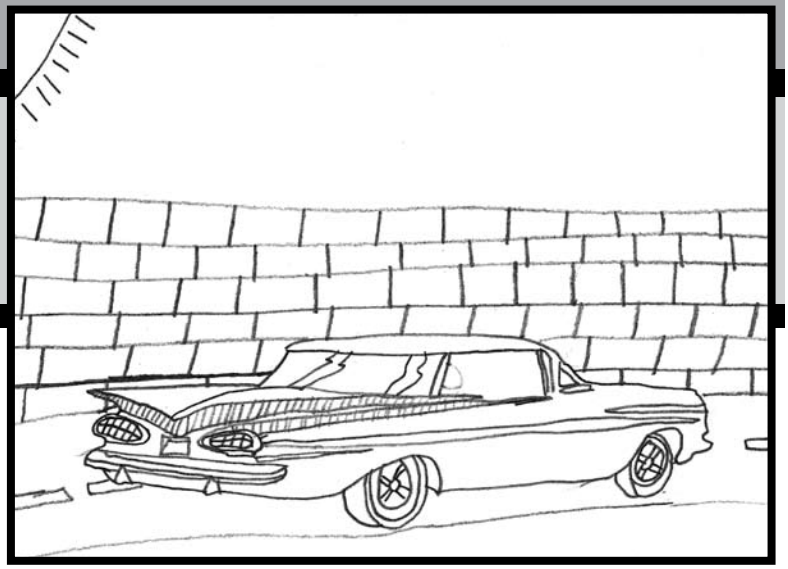
From The Beat: You're really lucky to have a beautiful family who supports you. What's the plan to stay out of trouble?

One Single Picture

If I had a chance to have a picture that I could take with me everywhere, it would be a picture of my family and my ex-boyfriend in front of my summer cabin in Camp Meeker, near the Russian River. I would have my family, because they're there for me most of the time, and I have my ex-boyfriend, Tim, because he was there when my family wasn't. I would get inspiration from this picture, because I know they love me.

-Love

From The Beat: Nice piece on that one picture. Family through thick and thin, if you are lucky is there for us, and for your ex, well, he seemed to be a part of your life at a time when you really needed his love, that's very fortunate.



Strugglin'

I'm thinking back on some old times
When I was a homeless man in the streets
Wit' my moms
Only tryin' to gain
Thinking back on all the things I done seen
Done wrong
Wishin' I can replace all the tears on her face
With a smile
Hopefully, I've been a good child
And this game's so cold,
When done been up down low,
Going hard on the dollar
It's been time when she holla'
And it's sad
And even though she makes me feel
I understand how this game has got me trapped
This one time
When I wanted things I couldn't have
'Cause, man! We ain't got it
Like that's kind of hard to forget
After struggle and striving
All the work we done met
And I'm thinking 'bout my brother (naw)
We ain't gone stay under
Flippin', ridin' with moms
And, yes, it's sad, 'cause it's wrong
Takin' care of needs of the house
When daddy wasn't 'round
Momma said to have respect
To go to school,
To make her smile

-Jayleon

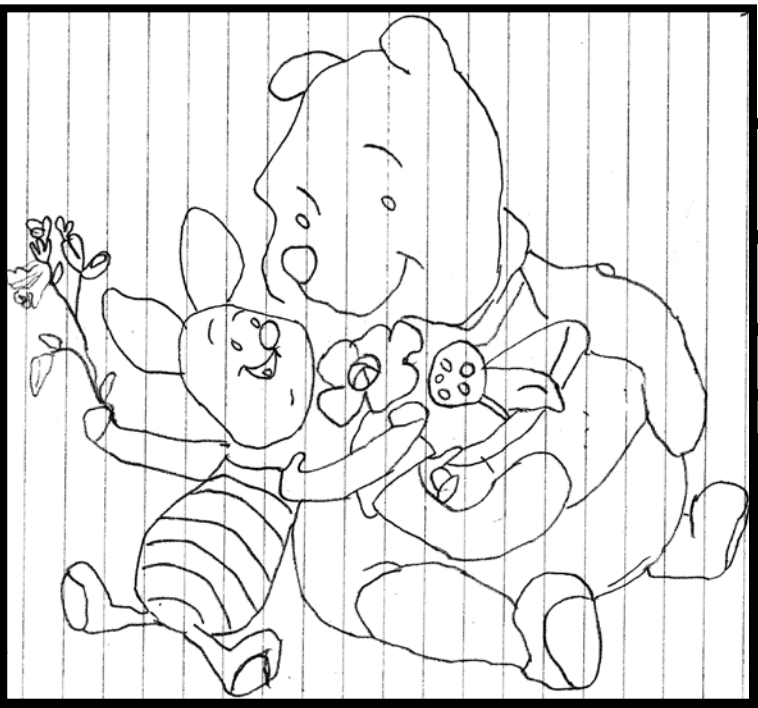
From The Beat: Every week your raps get more profound. It's hard to be the man of the house, now that your father's gone. But if that role seems too overwhelming, why not take it step by step, because messing up, getting arrested and, therefore, getting you out of any responsibility for your family, leaves them abandoned and hanging.

Must Be Nice

Must be nice to have a family who cares about you
Must be nice to have a home you go home to
Must be nice to have a nice, caring, loving life
Must be nice to go dumb and party like a rock star
Go fast like NASCAR
Must be nice to lie on your own bed
And not eat slop

-Lil' Super

From The Beat: We hear you, and we also read from your piece that in some of these statements you do have choices in the matter. Sure you can't change what has happened in the past, but now is the time to move on and not let it burden you. If you need help, now is the time to ask!



My Opinion

The system here isvery lazy. They suck. They are taking points and power tripping. I wish they would just realize that they sit on their asses all day and still complain. They get paid plenty, too.

I don't get it. I would be happy. I would try to help kids and have a positive attitude. The system folk at MCJH (Marin County Juvenile Hall) are lazy slackers. I am going to write a petition to get the "cancer" fired. They suck. They work at the most easiest juvenile hall in the damn state. They're horrible. I wish and hope this place would change for the future generation. I know y'all all feel me. The halls are like an inferior mark in our lives; well, for some.

I hope the "cancer" of the halls die. I am waiting on my ass to go to ROP (Rites of Passage.) Forget ROP. I've been there before, and it sucks and this place sucks, so I am going to have to change something about it. I am, and I'm going to be successful, because "You can achieve if you believe."

-Frogg

From The Beat: Okay, we get it, you have a problem with a particular person on staff. Well, venting on paper is fine, but in truth, the best thing you can do is talk to your lawyer, your PO, your family and get your grievances on record, especially if you have proof! If it's just a bad vibe, we suggest you smoother the staff you do not like with kindness and run a good program and don't bring further problems to you.

We Are Locked Up Together, So We Should Help Each Other

I think people in locked down facilities need to help each other more in positive ways, than them telling others now to cheat the system. And people should get along with each other, because you are locked up together or wherever it is you're at. So you should just stick together, instead of hating each other. But that's just my opinion and people don't actually do that, because nowadays it all about colors, 'hoods, so on. So I guess there would have to be world peace, which is never going to happen. And because of all of this, I never benefited from it. Except from the staff members--it was always nice to talk to them about things, but never from the young people. We would all find stuff in common--that wasn't good.

-Rock Star

From The Beat: You're right to a point, but none of this can happen unless it starts in the home, starts where you come from. If you have it in you to help, you will help those who reach out. As for the system, don't expect much , it's truly only there to house you until you are ready to leave. If you have good counselors that is truly a bonus.

My Thoughts

I hate you
I hate the fact that you lied
I hate you when you're gone
I hate you when you're here
I hate you like no other
I hate how you look at me
And everyone else
I hate how you want my attention
And in return, nothing
I hate you
You're a baby, a witch, an incapable human being
I hate you

-Star

From The Beat: Okay, this person has hurt you badly, and it has probably wounded you even more in juvy, since you can't do too much to make the situation with this person better. We hope that writing your heart out to this person helps you feel better, even if s/he never has a chance to read it.

Me Siento Preocupado

En el día de hoy me siento de hoy me siento bien preocupado porque aún no he podido saber nada de mi madre ni de mi familia. Cuando me sinto incapaz de algo que no puedo hacer, le pregunto a mis amigos o a los consejeros que hacer.

La juvenile no es la cosa más bonita que he visto en la mi vida. Siento que en la calle no deja nada bueno, sólo problemas.

From The Beat: Esperamos que tengas la oportunidad de comunicarte con tu familia. Si en verdad pides consejo, entonces escucha este: alejate de las malas influencias, ve a la escuela, y escucha a tus seres queridos que son los que quieren lo mejor para ti.

I Feel Worried

Today I feel very worried because I haven't heard from my mother or my family. When I feel incapable about doing something, I ask my friend or counselor what to do.

Juvenile hall is not a good thing I have seen in my life. I've also seen that the streets don't leave anything good but problems.

-Denis Y Francisco San Francisco

From The Beat: We hope you get the chance to communicate with your family. If you really ask for advice, get this one: stay away from bad influence, go to school, and listen to your loved ones who want the best for you.

Mi Gran Golpe

Fue cuando me encerraron a mí y a mi jaina en la juvenile. El problema es que me van a mandar para Nueva York y ella se va a quedar en California. No la quiero perder porque la mo mucho. Yo cre que en 30 días me voy.

Quiero regresar para atras para estar con mi jaina de nuevo y empezar nueva vida. Le pido a Dios que me cuide a mi nena y que me cambie para que nunca vuelva a caer en estas paredes.

Al a lo del Beat, quisiera que apoyaran a este programa porque nos aconsejan a nosotros de nuestros problemas que les contamos. ¡Apoyen al Beat! ¡No se metan en problemas!

From The Beat: Si de verdad quieres a esa muchacha lucha para salir adelante y ganartela otra vez. Primero, tendras que correguir la manera como llebas tu vida. ¿Crees que tengas la fuerza de voluntad para hacer esto? Todo es posible en esta vida cuando se desea con el corazón. Demuestralo, no sólo lo digas. ¿Entonces de donde comenzaras?

My Big Hit

It was when they incarcerated my girlfriend and me in juvenile hall. The problem is that they are going to send me to New York and she's staying in California. I don't want to lose her because I love her very much. I think I'm leaving in 30 days.

I want to come back to be with my girl again and start a new life. I ask God to take care of my babe and to change me to never end up in these walls.

And about The Beat, I wish people support this program because they advise us about how to solve our problems that we share. Support The Beat! Don't get into more problems!

-Coño, San Jose

From The Beat: If you really care for that girl, you should fight to succeed and gain her back. First of all, you have to correct the way you are living your life. ¿Do you think you have the will power to make this happen? Everything is possible in this life when it is desired from the heart. Show it, and don't just say it! So where would you start?

Una Experiencia

Bueno, habla Knight Owl. Les voy a contar algo que me pasó exactamente un año. Estaba en mi barrio con los homies, como siempre, pero ese día se puso caliente. Habían un chingo de juras y decidi irme a otra parte más segura. En el transcurso de mi camino, encontre algunos enemigos y comenzamos a hecharnos un tiro. Cuando de pronto sentí un golpe por la espalda y eran unos cuantos vatos. Corri y cuando mire que mi ropa estaba lleno de sangre, me di cuenta que me habían fileriado.

Chale, pense que ya me llebaba la chingada. Pedi ayuda y me llebaron al hospital. Estuve unos días de coma y unos cuantos en reposo.

Saben que, todavía estoy down por mi barrio. Todo eso que me pasó me hizo fuerte.

From The Beat: Que lastima que despues de tal experiencia, hayas aprendido la lección equivocada. En vez de que esta experiencia te haya servido para reflecionar en las cosas malas que estas haciendo en tu vida, en como puedes llegar a terminar, y quienes sufririan por ti, nos dices que esta experiencia te hizo más fuerte y más down por tu barrio. ¿Qué es lo que tienes en vez de cedebro? ¿Tienes corazón? ¿Si de esta te salvastes, crees que te salvaras de la otra? ¿Si la vida te dio otra oportunidad de vida, porque la vas a tirara a la basura? Estar en coma, es como estar casi muerte. ¿Apoco no sabes eso?

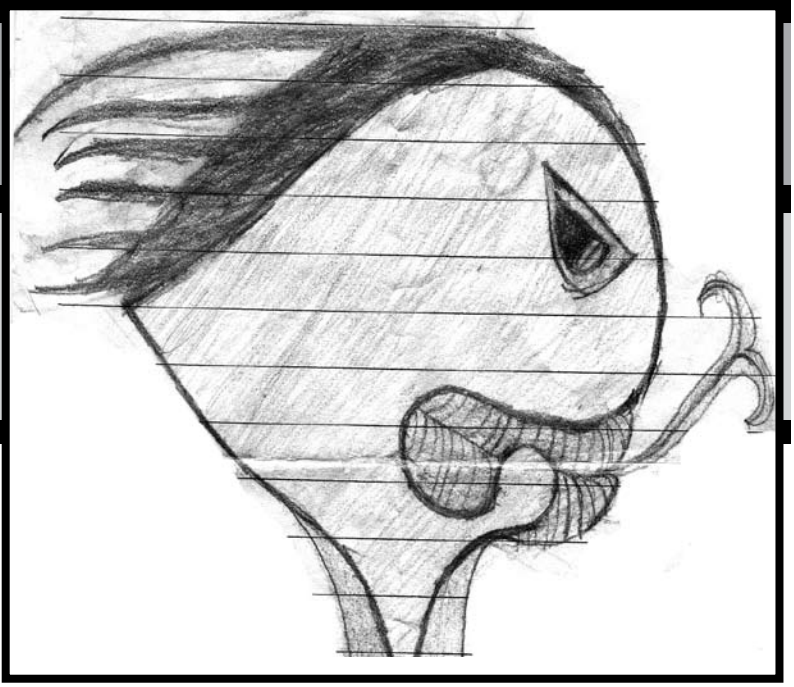
A Bad Experience

Hey, this is Knight Owl. I'm going to share something that happened exactly a year ago today. I was in my 'hood with the homies as always, but that day was very hot. There were many cops around, so I decided to go to a more secure place. On the way, I encountered some enemies, and we started throwing down. All of a sudden, I felt a hit from the back and they were a few other guys. I ran and when I looked at my clothes, it was bloody, and then I realized I was stabbed.

Damn, I thought I was screwed up. I asked for help and I was taken to the hospital. I spent a few days in coma and a few days in recovery. But you know what? I'm still down for my 'hood. All that happened to me just made me stronger.

-Knight Owl, Alameda

From The Beat: It's a shame that after such an experience, you've got the wrong message. Instead of helping you in reflecting on the wrong things you've been doing in your life, how you could end up your life and who would suffer for your mistakes, you are telling us that this experience has made you stronger and more down for your 'hood! What do you have as a brain? Do you have a heart? If you made it this time, do you think you'll be able to make it the next time? If life gave you another chance, why are you going to throw it in the garbage can? Being in a coma is like being half dead. Do you know that?



Esa Es La Vida Que Tendras

La vida es bonita cuando no estas en un lugar como la cárcel, donde te dicen que hacer, y que no hacer. Aqui es la vida mala. Si eso es lo que quieres, eso es lo que vas a tener por el resto de tu vida. Una vez estando aqui no sales de ahí aunque tú quieras porque ya estas en el sistema.

From The Beat: Es verdad! ¿Y cual es la vida que quieres para ti? ¿Has pensado en eso? ¿Será la misma que llebas u otra?

That's The Life You Will Have

Life is beautiful when you're not in a place like jail, where they tell you what to do, and what not to do. Here is a bad life. If this is what you want, this is what you will get for the rest of your life. Once being here, you won't get out even if you like because you're in the system.

-Speedy, Alameda

From The Beat: That's true! What type of life do you want for you? Have you thought about it? ¿Will it be the same you've been living or a different one?

Problemas Estando Encerrado

Que onda Beat? Soy Lil J de Oakland. Pues aún estando aqui encerrado me llegan los problemas como si fuera aire. Me acabo de enterar que voy a estar preso seis meses. También me enteré que me acompaña mi primo.

Estoy muy triste porque ya no la puedo kikiar con mis homies y siento feo al no poder hablar como mi madre.

Estaría muy feliz si me dieran la oportunidad de poder salir de nuevo ya que es mi primera vez. También me preocupo por mi novia porque me cuentan que está muy triste. Por una parte le doy gracias a Dios por estar aqui y que me dio la oportunidad de conocer la cárce lo cual hace que nunca vuelva aqui.

From The Beat: Cometistes errores y ahora tienes que tomar responsabilidad por tus acciones. Te recomendamos que busques la forma de alejarte de esos homies, porque estando con ellos es la razón por la cual tú estas encerrado. Si ya no quieres volver a este lugar, tienes que hacer un efuerzo de alejarte de los problemas. Piensa en cosas nuevas y positivas que te puedan mejorar tu vida, que la haga más facil y segura. El tipo de vida que estas jugando no te cabe. Tú perteneces a otro mundo no este.

Problems While Being Incarcerated

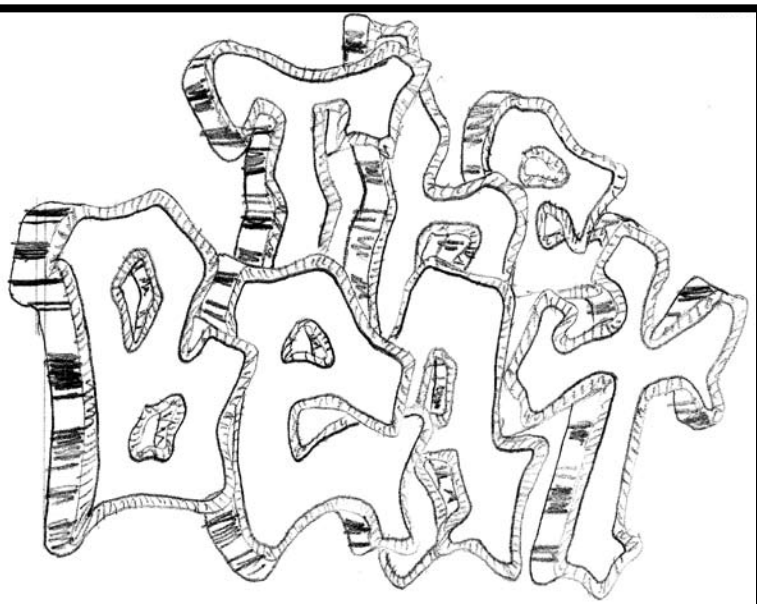
What's up Beat! This is Lil' J from Oakland. Even when I'm locked up, I'm still getting into trouble as I get air. I just found out that I'm going to be locked up for six months. I also found out that my cousin is going with me.

I'm sad because I can't kick it with my homies anymore, and it is also sad that I can't speak to my mother.

I'll be happy if they gave me the chance to get out of here being my first time. I also worry about my girlfriend because they told me that she's sad. On one side, I'm happy God gave me the opportunity to be in this place which will help me to never come back again.

-Lil' J, Alameda

From The Beat: You've committed mistakes and now you have to take responsibility for your actions. We recommend that look for ways to stay away from those "homies," because they may be the reason why you're locked up. If you don't want to come back to this place, you have to make an effort to stay away from trouble. Think about new and positive things that you can do to better your life, to make it easier and safer. The type of life you've playing doesn't fit you. You belong to a different world.



Día Soñando

Me la paso soñando dispierto en mi cuarto, pensando en cuando saldre de este cuarto, lo que hacen mis amigos en la calle, tratando de que sepa mi mama que antes mi mundo era formado de cariño de mi madre. Ahora sólo tengo unas paredes y una puerta como forma de mi mundo.

Pienso que el mundo da muchas vueltas y ahora me toco perder. Aveces digo que de todas manera algún día saldre de esta vida y entraré a la que mi familia quiso para mí.

From The Beat: ¡Ese es el espiritu! Algún día saldras de esta vida, pero para que esto pase, tienes que buscar la manera como alejarte de las cosas que te traen a este lugar. La vida no sera el quien te aparte de la negatividad que te rodeas, mas que tu mismo. ¿Que dices? ¿Estas dispuesto a hacerlo?

Day Dreaming

I spend my day day-dreaming in my room, thinking when I'm going to leave this room, thinking about what my friends are doing on the streets, and just hoping that my mom realize that before my world was formed of the love of a mother. Now, all I have are walls and a door as my whole world.

I think that the world makes many turns and now it was my time to lose. Sometimes I say to myself that in any way, I'll get out from this life and I'll return to the life my family wants for me.

-Jose, San Jose

From The Beat: That's the spirit! Some day you'll get out and stay out, but in order for this to happen, you have to look for a way to keep yourself away from those things that can bring you back in here. Life by itself won't be the one that can make you stay away from the negativity that surrounds you, but yourself. So, what do you say? Are you ready to make it happen? If so, what are you willing to do for a better life?

I'm happy God gave me the opportunity to be in this place which will help me to never come back again.

ALEX SHELTON

Wow... wait until you read these next two poems sent to us by our beloved Beat veteran, Alex Shelton. We first met him as an amazing artist when he sent some of his creations, but we were blown away by his writing each time. He keeps the streak going by writing two great pieces about opposite sorts of women he's experienced in his life. The first, "Granny Knows Best," is a wonderful tribute to his grandmother who we're sorry to say has passed away. But her memory and lessons live on in Alex and you'll witness how apparent that is when you read on. The second and concluding poem is about women who choose to live life on the edge. A "woman warrior" sounds empowering, but we read the poem and it sounds like Alex meant it in a different way. It's brilliant. His way with words is outstanding and we will be awaiting more. He's writing from Kern Valley State Prison in Delano, CA.

Granny Knows Best

Grey hair combed nicely
Fragrances smelling so-lovely
Grandma knows best
A real enthusiast
My loving grandma sitting in her comfortable recliner
I can see the cup steaming and half-empty, coffee John Wayne Style
And I thought all the while...
And now I'm here writing about my grandma in a poem,
It's been almost three decades gracefully
Resting peacefully
She was hoping the very best for me
Prison awaiting thee?
My key reasons are in variety, don't know where to start
A youth with a lil' gangster muscle
Connected to an increasingly troubled heart,
World's greatest Grandma, world's toughest — my smiling face knows the speedy slap
Faster than a clap
Ice cream and cookies and resting on her lap
It was hard to disagree, I didn't want to antagonize, or upset
She was stable
Able
Capable plus remarkable
For God really did install a strong willed woman who had become fiercely loyal to him
I didn't mind, the baby-sitter, my mom or my school teacher
Only grandma and her church preacher
I had a homeboy even when I was blind to the riding
His name was crazy grim reaper gliding
Grandma's gone, I desperately need her penetrating influence
She was my number-one obstacle to stability
Not crumbled in a ball and thrown away
Her wisdom is a broader-context
Written on my heart completely
She once said: "Give a man a fish and he'll eat for a day,
Give a man a car, money and a girl and he'll call in sick" for a lifetime!
She told me to always remember the scriptures
And to always keep in my wallet – her pictures!
Her lighted candles and desperate prayers for me,
I know I am saved forever – and that's great
Read John 10:28
"And I give unto them eternal life;
And they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."
So open your door to John 5:24,
Verily, Verily, I say unto you,
He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life
And shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life"
Like a bird protecting its nest
"Granny Knows Best"

Woman Warriors RIP

Stunningly rendered is the seeking of adventure
and excitement none more so than a woman warrior significance,
Combining the traits of her pride, and ready to ride
In swelling numbers, and hardening attitudes,
Jumped into the gang-bunch it was no hunch,
No one could break her young mind, no fear/warning,
A lost-soul sentimentality in thru one ear and out the other,
From one mother to the other — heard it many times before,
Dad couldn't even the score should've stayed home with your precious little baby, yeah sure, okay, maybe?
Ferocious young warriors, rumbling mites and numerous catfights,
Hostile homegirls, will they ever decide enough is enough!
Gang death is just a routine will it cost you yours to actually sending their best friends up the river,
Mud bank — dead opinions won't matter,
lips won't move to try and flatter, G's ain't into pranks!
Some bad cats will flatter
Without a vision of husband and wife kissing on the alter,
Diamonds gleaming like lightning bolts shocked by electric chair volts,
To say more boldly can't you see the plastic smiles,
Cold handshakes and the bucket loads of money flowing quick,
Homies passing out chump change makes me sick,
Like really doing someone a favor,
Like pepper without the flavor, another warrior added they savor
I've seen some crazy homegirls in my prime
80's time, reaching for the stars,
The power, waiting to strike, too damn dangerous,
Razors stashed in the voice-box,
Locks in the sox, man they were a trip
Taking a potent zip,
Festooned with tattoo-work, going berserk,
How much more is she willing to sacrifice of herself
Can she last, these sins? the hopeful, trends
Children calling out for mama, everyday, mama needs her children now,
Investing time leading them into education
Dressing and feeding,
With a goodbye kiss, or absurdly involved in "G" demon-stration
So think of the gestation
God will give you just a little more time,
He's stilling waiting for the big change
Watching you from the heavenly range,
Blessed with marriage?
In snow-white carriage-life-long commitment,
Faithfully between man and wife, designed reproductive-system,
And the ninth month period wait
He's never late time to prepare for a family addition
Which is brilliantly spiritual reality,
Tired of too many relationships,
I don't want a gangster wife that's not a specialty,
Life is not a scrambled puzzle
With missing pieces, don't need to dazzle free of hassle,
Footnotes full of sample of the vicious "G" trample
Political freeze on the local G's logic and reason from diversity
Truth needs a real voice in today's society

"Get Down!!!" (Boom) My eyes begin to run not because I'm crying but because the tear gas is taking effect.

EDWARD ATKINS **Prison politics are the worst because since you're around so many people all the time, most of which demand respect, you have to be aware of your every move, or else it could lead to a riot where people are getting killed. And over the most unnecessary occurrences like mean mugging someone, or taking too long on the phone when someone's got next. When deprived of so much, we resort to desperate measures to keep the little bit we do have. Reputation means a lot when you're incarcerated because reputation alone can determine whether you are a target or not. It's crazy how the system works. They lock people up in cages like animals and then get shocked when people start acting like animals. It's definitely a lose, lose situation. We have to apologize to Edward because we published Entry Three and the Joy And Pain Finale before we published entry one and entry two. We guess this means people will have to have all four issues in front of them to piece them all together. However, it won't be that hard because each of Edward's entries could stand alone as pieces by themselves. Again, we apologize and we'll try not to let it happen again. He's writing from Pelican Bay State Prison in Crescent City, CA.**

Joy and Pain: Entry One

...To rise is to live above means, to live above means is to defeat poverty, to defeat poverty is to prevail, rise I say, and live life to the fullest...

Prison Winter 2002. "Get Down!!!" (Boom) The sound of riot guns serenade the corridor as me and five of my homeboys are in a heated battle with another race. My adrenaline is pumping, my heart is racing and fear is drowning my thoughts as I fight for what I believe is survival. Blood compliments the air as manmade weapons rip through flesh.

"Get Down!!!" (Boom) My eyes begin to run not because I'm crying but because the tear gas is taking effect.

"Get Down!!!" (Boom) Another blast this time I fall to my knees. I'm hit and the rubber bullet is coated with D.N.A. "Get Up" I tell myself, now I'm back on my feet and shoes are squeaking as we all struggle to keep our balance.

"Get Down !!!" (Boom). This time I duck afraid of getting struck again, and as I do, I see one of my opposing parties get hit in the face and fall flat to the ground. Blood seeps from his wound like a river flowing freely.

(Click, Click) "Get Down!!!" the gun tower yells for what seems like the umpteenth time. (Boooom) "Now that's a real bullet" I say to myself and as we all hug the ground in prone position. The 223 from the mini-14 continues to ricochet within a cell right where we lay upon the tier. One of my homeboys is still fighting because two opposing parties are advancing within his proximity. "Lay down big man or your next," orders the gun tower. "Chill Out Homie" I say. As we lay there smoke from the tear gas encircles us and for a moment we are blind, well at least I am for sure. Correction officers descend upon the tier handcuffing and escorting us one by one and I am the first to get escorted. Sharp pain on the left side of my back causes me to cringe as I am lead out the building.

As I walk through the Chow Hall (Dining Hall) the expressions on faces of fellow inmates and one of my closest homies tells me that they are trying to figure out what happened. "It went down" I say barley able to speak because my throat is burning and dry. "It went down" I say again and they still can't understand my words. As I walk through the adjoining building I repeat myself, "It went down." Finally one person knew what I meant. As the breeze from the early morning air hit my face I see another one of my homeboys who was on his way to work. "It went down," I say to him but prior to such we had a falling out so I guess he ignored my attempt to communicate.

Just as I got in the holding cage another alarm went off and a massive melee was under way. In the Chow Hall I just walked through. 300 people were involved and only eight of us (my homies and myself) ended up in the hole. Before we went to the hole we were able to pack up our property so as I entered my cell. The first thing I did was grab (2) pouches of tobacco and some plastic, stuffed it in my pocket, and finished gathering my stuff because it was going to be a cool minute before I saw a main line (general population) again. That day me and my homeboys smoked and clowned for about (17) hours as the police sorted out and investigated the incident.

Before all of this, let me take you to what caused all this chaos. 5:30 AM today was a regular day to me, well it started out as such. I completed my daily ritual: washed my face, brushed my teeth, and combed my hair. Not much talking going on between me and my cellmate (older homie). Music blasting different stations and tunes and soon the whole building is rising preparing for chow (breakfast). My mind is stuck on a dream I had the night before. Oddly as it may seem, I had a dream that an opposing party stabbed me in the back (the left side to be exact). As we exited the cell we (me and my homies) lag back waiting for us to all push to the dining hall as one. As we waited for our last (2) homies to exit their cells a confrontation sparks, a couple of dudes (mainly one problem starter) is red eyeing (mad dogging) one of my homeboys as they descend down the stairs. "You know me or something?" says my homie.

"What?" the other fools say, but at the same time, he's looking at the gun tower like my homeboy was pulling a punk move or something. He and his crew kept walking. My other homies came out and we headed to the mess hall while we strolled we discuss what had taken place and my homeboy decided that he'll talk to the dude (well at least try). Once we entered the mess hall my homeboy told the other dude that after chow (breakfast) he wanted to talk to him. I placed my lunch in my cell on my tier and waited for my homeboy to come up. The stupid thing is I'm up there with dude and six of his homeboys by myself, now that's playing it close wouldn't you say? Anyways, as my homies came up, the scene reminded me of elementary because we went through the whole "you know me?" "No I don't know you, you know me?" And like that it was on up until the first punch I was mentally laughing like crazy because it was stupid. You see prison is very, very petty, and things like looking at or in someone's direction could cause a whole situation to occur. I only ended up with a big scab on my back but just imagine that just because someone looked at my homeboy I almost could have been killed.

A lot of people think jail is a joke and tend to keep entering the revolving door like it's the thing to do. This is my first time for everything and I experienced juvenile hall, CYA, County Jail and Prison all before I was even eighteen. Jail is not where it's at young people because just like that you can be seriously hurt or killed for a pencil missing, a song being played another person doesn't like, etc... This is just one of my life altering events and as I continue to fill you in from my street to jail life and the hardships I've suffered I pray that you learn from my personal experiences and follow a better road. Remember I was a kid when I entered and when I leave I'll be an adult with nothing to show for it.

...A message is wisdom and very fruitful if one pays attention but to the ignorant a message is just noise they feel is not worth to heed.

...Be smart

KENNETH FLOYD ***This next Beat veteran is writing in from Sumter Correctional Institution in Bushnell, Florida, where he is serving a 15-year mandatory sentence on a drug charge. In the first piece, he's commenting on all the media coverage of Paris Hilton. And the injustice of our justice system — start wars with the poor and butt kiss the rich while working class families are spending their hard earned tax dollars on a system that isn't working. The second paints a picture of the life he was living that brought him to prison. You would think a near-death car accident would change his mind about his lifestyle, but he's keeping a great perspective on his whole situation saying that God let him survive the car accident so he could do time in prison. Well, we definitely know one positive that came out of all of this for Kenneth and that's that he got to meet our angel, Nancy, and she is one of the most, if not the most, caring people we know. Thank you for corresponding with such an amazing writer Nancy.***

And Justice For All

Thousands of calls poured into the media, people outraged over the release of Paris Hilton. They said the justice system was two-sided, that there was a system for those that have, and a system for those who don't have. So because of all the outrage she was sent back to jail. Now they are saying that the justice system is equal, that it doesn't matter how much money you have, you will still do time.

What a joke. Just because they corrected one wrong does not make the justice system equal. All over the country, everyday, the justice system slaps the rich on the hand and sets them free while the poor do hard time. Just like in my case, if I would have had the money to pay for a lawyer, I would be free now. But because I had a public defender, here I sit with a 15-year mandatory.

There were thousands of calls about Paris. Why does everyone turn a blind eye to the system when it comes to everyone else? Why aren't we screaming to the top of our lungs when a child molester is set free or given a very short sentence? Why don't we speak up when a non-violent offender is given too harsh of a sentence? The system was made by the people, but somewhere along the way the people have lost control of the system. We the people need to take back our country.

Keeping quiet about injustice is not working. The prisons are warehousing too many of our people, wasting tax dollars to take the life and youth out of our family and friends. Imprisoning non-violent offenders for decades is a waste of our money. There are over 2.2 million people incarcerated in America. It costs over $50 a day to house one inmate. That adds up to a lot of money everyday. So I say again, voice yourselves. Let's take our justice system back.

Serving 15 Years

Drinking liquor all day, I don't want the party to end. It's time to wake up. Driving fast to get some dope. I'm all over the road. I start to run off the road, I correct it and get back on the road. I awake, not knowing where I am. Did I pull over and go to sleep? I look up at the windshield. It's shattered. I try to get up. I can't. My right arm and legs are turned ways you cannot turn them. The pain hits me. I pass out. The next thing I know EMS and Fire Department, State Trooper are there, asking me questions. What is your name? What is your phone number? I then hear the jaws- of-life start up and cut the car open. I pass out. The next thing I remember is the sound of a helicopter blade turning. I pass out. I'm in the hospital. They cut my clothes off. I pass out. I awake, and I'm in pain all over. I can't talk. They have a tube down my throat. There are two nurses there and they are saying to me, "Boy, you really messed yourself up this time," and they are laughing at me. I can't talk so I can't tell them shut up or whatever.

With the only working arm I have, I write "P.A.I.N" in the air over and over until one of the nurses realizes what I'm trying to say. "Oh, you're in pain." He hands me a button and tells me to push it when I'm in pain. I push it and I feel the warm liquid morphine running up my arm. I'm high. This is what I wanted. Just a little car wreck. I still got what I was after — a buzz. Little did I know I was almost dead. My face was broken all to pieces and both legs and my right arm were broken in three places. I had three surgeries that week that I knew nothing about. I was in a drug-induced coma for a month.

When I awoke I found that I had been cut all over by the surgeons. One cut was from ear to ear over the top of my head for facial reconstruction. The surgeon told my mom he quit counting at 150 screws. I wished I would have died. I was a good-looking man, and now look at me. Why did God force me to live, to look like this? Well, that happened years ago. You would think that after that I wouldn't touch alcohol or drugs again but that didn't stop me. So now I sit in prison, doing a 15-minimum-mandatory. I believe God spared me so I could do this time in prison.

RAYMOND ***Going off the old James Brown song, "I'm Black And I'm Proud," this next writer expresses the ills of his people and the struggles he has to go through on a day to day basis because he is a Black man. He envisions something better for his people and is frustrated that the passionate energy from the Civil Rights movement hasn't leaked over to the generations who are up and coming now. We believe he has a very real concern, however, we can't create unity out of hate and to those who are still involved in the destruction of their people rather than the furtherance, we should practice patience when dealing with them. It's hard to be patient when we see that things should be a certain way and they're not. And they don't even look they will be. He's writing from the SHU (Security Housing Unit) in Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA.***

I'm Black And I'm Proud

What happened to the days when the late great James Brown sang, "Say it loud, I'm black and I'm proud!" When Americans of African descent bonded as one in a united front to overthrow the chains of oppression and demand equality in employment, housing, healthcare, and education. Instead of being in quenched in a lifetime of poverty, illiteracy, hopelessness and frustration.

When pioneers such as Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. proudly gave heir lives to teach us what is morally right? When African queens Angela Davis and Assata Shakur taught us the "real" definition of how to be a beautiful strong black lady? The days when afros were the thing and we'd pump our fists in a "Black Power" salute, exemplifying pride in the faces of those who resisted change. Then pour out a little liquor and give a 21-gun salute in honor of all the civil right soldiers we lost in the struggle for the betterment of the entire African Race?

Judging from the state Americans of African descent is in today: comprising half of the over 2 million prison population, highest ratios of high school and college dropouts, 7-times more likely to fall victim to violent crimes at the hands of a silhouette reflection of ourselves than a white, highest percentage to die from aids, heart attacks, strokes, colon or prostate cancer, breast cancer, diabetes, obesity, infant mortality, approximately 75% of Black households being run by single mothers, mental illnesses running rampant amongst people of color, dwindling employment of people of color in major corporations, television and radio, the lack of trust and disunity amongst Africans, a lot of people of color fitting the lazy and stupid stereotypical roles the media projects, the self-defeat street attitudes and hopelessness a lot of blacks still possess self-hatred and black leaders black women being the authoritative figures and/or breadwinners in 2 parent homes young black males surpassing the "endangered species" category I can only say today's blacks are a "disgrace" to all the moral architects who sacrificed or gave their lives for Americans of African descent to have "Civil-Rights" and enjoy the "American Dream."

James Brown sang: "Say it loud I'm black and I'm proud!"

Almost half a century later I still yearn for that day to finally come when all my people can stand a top the rooftop of the freedom tower in New York City and boldly scream to the world: "I'm black and I'm proud!"

Bottom Up

DANIEL ROWE *Daniel is a great storyteller and he's been telling us stories for quite awhile now. He likes to set up the scene for us and start dialogue between people. This week he sends us a very inspiring story about a woman who went from the bottom, up. Hence, the title... It has a great moral in that she put her mind to something and with perseverance made it work and became very successful. We're guessing his intention was to make us believe that we can achieve anything we put our minds to and we thank him for the incredible lesson. He's writing from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA. Let's all learn something from Julie.*

Scene One:
Location: Exterior, in the middle of an unknown town, Sarah, a beautiful young Asian woman, 29 years old, slim, tall, brown eyes, dark hair, wearing daisy duke short jeans, and a blue tank top shirt, no socks, no shoes, walking along the earth. She starts to talk to God.

Sarah: Lord, give a blessing to promote my life to a more sane and wealthy life. I know that blessing may take awhile to explain fully, but I'll appreciate a small step at a time.

Sarah walked two miles and ran into a large pile of old rags and an old sewing machine. She smiled, and swiftly accumulated all that can be used. Abruptly a hard wind blows her away advancing her a few feet from the ground. She lands in a town called Aesthetic City where she opens a shop making and designing clothes out of the rags that she had accumulated. With business running out of a warehouse that blew her way from her prayer. She gets a call from a connection to do business.

Sarah: Hello, Sarah speaking.
A voice from the other end speaks (female by the name of Julie)

Julie: Hello Sarah, this is Julie from "Torrid Wear." I would like to negotiate a business deal of 500 pairs of your hottest dresses in silk and 500 in cotton.

Sarah: Okay, I'll tell you what 50,000 dollars up front for those 1000 dresses and I'll have them delivered to you tomorrow morning.

Julie: it's a deal. See you tomorrow morning!

Sarah: Okay, bye!

Scene Two:
Location: Interior, Aesthetic City, the next morning, Sarah's assistant, Dave, a short heavy set Asian man pulls into the garage of "Torrid Wear" with the delivery order to trade off. Julie approaches Dave and introduces herself.

Julie: Good morning, I'm Julie

Dave: I'm Dave, nice to meet you.

Julie: Same here. You can just unload the dresses and leave them here. My employees will handle it from here.

After Dave unloads the dresses he collects the $50,000 and gets back to Aesthetic City, where Torrid Wear is. Phone call after phone call business is a huge success. Another blow of wind, but this time it was stronger, and Julie got lifted off the second layer of ground. She finds herself in a more wealthy and elated class. (Los Angeles County, Hollywood California) Julie buys a mansion, a Benz, an SUV, all happening in a more suitable place for a fashion business. And she was set for life in the billionaire class. Julie started from the ground and crawled her way up 'til she touched the sky, and sky isn't the limit because she is still going.

E-MONEY *E-Money has truly been writing us from prison for too long. We first met him in the maximum security unit (back then it was B5) of YGC (San Francisco County Juvenile Hall). He ended up doing a long bid and then he got paroled and started working with us in the office. It was a pleasure to have his spiritual insights around in the office because he offered inspiration. However, we believe he attempted to hit the ground running too fast and got locked back up. We know he was probably feeling embarrassed and foolish while having to go back to San Francisco County Jail. But with incarceration comes deep thoughts. We're talking about thoughts that have been marinated on for a while. Not like out here where we give our thoughts a few seconds to have the stage and then we're back to our 'normal' routine — whatever that is. He's writing from San Quentin State Prison in San Quentin, CA, and we're glad we've been blessed in knowing him all this time. Thank you for all you've given to The Beat, E-Money.*

Hard Times

All what's flowing through my mind is hard times. Absent of sunny days I sit in a cell watching my skin turn pale. Morning arrives at my door with a headache. I guess you can say I been thinking too much or sleeping too much. One of the two. I can't help but to notice a crook in my neck — a pillow no longer loves me and the luxury of a face towel was in the heavens of my dreams before I woke up to a living hell.

I patiently wait for better days, but times been ticking and everyday say the same damn thing, "hard times." I don't know if I should cry or laugh, but Mama has taught me "Men don't cry" and it ain't shhh that's funny, so I guess that's not an option. Instead, I take this anger and pain and let it elevate both my strength and mind impregnating the womb of future. A ravel is soon to be born. A dis-ease is soon to enter the existing order and that broad medicine is nowhere to be found. No need for the ambulance that boy is deadly! So birth Me and put Yourself in a body bag. My Mother America will take care of the expenses.

If they're asking for hard times, hard times I'm going to give them. I don't mean to be rude but when you're falsely accused you can't help but to have a Political Prisoner Attitude. Times got to change in the name of revolution because prisoners are being treated like dirt behind the walls of these California institutions. As if a rose going to grow from this misconduct, your tax dollars are used to create more pain, care to have a receipt? Your vote is taking to contradict your request. Don't you feel robbed or better yet hoodwinked? Your selection stinks like gasoline. Thanks for adding fuel to my fire. Our environment looks real pretty but how long can you cover up the ugliness?

The truth of the matter is you're living lies and you know I don't lie, California is lock 'em up state and you threw away the key. There is more violence than ever, today — can't you see — new laws don't create nothing but a new chapter of violence? If you were more concerned about pulling that tree from the roots and not its leaf maybe you'll find a solution. But you don't care about solutions. All you care about is answers and answers are qualified to be wrong. You hated rains, black rain destroying your environment with your misjudgments. All I see is a gang of wanna-be Einsteins but nobody got the cure.

Love brings love, hate brings hate that just how it always been. Don't expect a positive out of a negative it just don't happen like that. It's hard for a lion to come out nice after spending years in a cage, his frustrations is eventually going to show. I'm not saying let the world run wild, All I'm saying is a hug is sometimes all a lion needs to change. I'm a victim of hard times and this is my story. But don't drown me in your tears instead protect this code like a bible protect a prophet words "free the chains of America; it is tired of being handcuffed by hard times."

THE BEAT WITHOUT

REGINA ***Ah, how sweet it is to be able to find your voice, especially when people haven't heard you for so long like this next writer. She writes a poem about her voice and how she's been screaming to be heard for so long. Her screams fell on deaf ears in the beginning, but now she's projecting her voice to the world. And we're grateful to have taken part in giving her sort of a loud speaker to do so in our pages. She's putting the voice that so many people have tried to ignore on a platform called The Beat Within and we know how empowering it is for her to be heard because in her poem it sounds like she thrives on being heard. And we love listening... She's wrote this piece from a place unknown to us, but we are so honored to have recently met her and the way things look, we are honored that she is seriously thinking about volunteering with us too! We can't wait for her to see this.***

My Voice

as a child i screamed, did you not
hear me?
was my voice not piercing enough?
i yelled, i cried
unheard, denied
no grace granted

i learned fear
i soaked up smiling when hurt
trying to manipulate my life into
"yes, i'm alright"
receiving top marks in
taking on others opinions of me
it seemed to make them happy
"that regina, she is so good, bad,
lovely, a disaster"
they would say
what they didn't understand is that
i lost me
my own unique strength?
i didn't know it

one day i stopped "listening"
to the voices, opinions, insights
i wanted to know me
what did i think, what was i saying
i decided to speak, and loudly
their ears denied my spirit
it was my turn
"accept it, accept me
this is the way it is now,
or you can choose to fly away," i said
i will make it easy
here is my back
glance at it once more as you walk
away
i don't need you
i don't

strength, i thought
but, that was the day
a piece of my soul died
i learned only to "speak" harder,
higher
my heart was still muted
unheard, i continued my struggle
to crawl out of the pit of
"you are silenced"
but gently one day a wing appeared
i climb upon its soft feathers
i heard its breath speak
i am here
a beautiful name
solace and peaceful understanding
held me so, i cried out
"teach me, dear precious comforter,
teach me.
i reached out to your sweet embrace.
will my voice be denied?
i am screaming weary
yelling tired
i don't understand my tears
show me my darkness
childhood nightmares, childhood dark
silence.
i began to feel the flow of
rest, calmness

i am pursuing
the prize of listening in truth
hearing through my own silence
a past point of pain
but need it be so?
perhaps this unchartered space is a
place
of grafting beauty's lessons
upon my heart
and i am not alone
the wing has brought to me a new
friend
discernment
she holds my hand, clears the way
i begin to know - see
the quiet voice inside my soul
i have heard it before
yet it seems different, stronger
softly, it speaks
"know me
search me
i am your words"
i am here
has spoken
and i have heard
my voice

My Own Reality

Concrete walls, barbed-wire, lockdown
Lonely years drift by, tell me how that sound
When you're stuck in the system, trying to find your way out
Takin' a step in the right direction but you always fall down
Things be getting hectic, you don't know which way to turn
Your momma cries at night, overwhelmed with concern
Cause she don't want to see your life end in casualties
To all my homies who died before their time, homies rest in peace
Yet you're still in a struggle, not letting time get to your head
Reminiscin' every night right before you go to bed
Thinking about those precious memories you once spent with a smile
Then your anger starts to rise when you think you should of went to trial
Now you're living in a place self-divided by gangs and race
Where fights and riots kick off and you become accustomed to smelling mace
Never knowing what can happen, time-catchin', it's ridiculous
I hold my ground strong, observing and being conspicuous
Trying not to lose focus, I keep my mind elevated
But it's hard to do right when you know you're gang affiliated
And institutionalized I sadly became used to this stressful livin'
An inmate of the state #91196 is the new name I was given
Now I wear state clothes and take only 3-minute showers
Waking up before the sun does in the peek of the hours
Lost from a world of dreams and desires
I'm trapped inside these gates surrounded by barbed wire
Hopin' to get a visit or hear from someone in a letter
But many months go by, homies disappear and change up like the weather
So you just cut them off, with only your loved ones that remain
And realize your family's been there through the suffering and pain
With less than a handful of friends really giving you support
Thank you for listening, sincerely, A Ward of the Court

MOUSY ***We first met this next writer in our workshops in Hillcrest (San Mateo County Juvenile Hall) and now he's writing in from CYA (The California Youth Authority) in Stockton, CA. He sends us two incredible poems this week. The first, "My Own Reality," is about the revelations he's learned while going through the experience of getting locked up. From witnessing the unconditional love from family to wishing he took his case to trial instead of what we're assuming is taking a plea bargain. His second and concluding poem is a prayer that he says daily. And we can see why, it's great. We'll leave you with some dedications he wrote to his family that are incarcerated too. "To my Brother in County Jail, keep your head up, Carnal, and to my cousin in juvy, I love you Primo. For our familia, let's pray the best and one day we'll be reunited once again, like old times. Until then stay safe and God bless. Let's do our time, and not let time do us. Our family is waiting. Con amor y respectos," Mousy***

My Daily Prayer

Heavenly Father, looking down from above
Watching over his children, please embrace me with your love
And forgive me for my sins from yesterday and tomorrow
Have mercy on me Father, and release me from my sorrow
Because my heart is torn from all the years I have wasted
Away from my loved ones, I'm always on the run or incarcerated
I want you in my life, and need you 24/7
So when I die I can rest in paradise with you up in heaven
So bless me with your love and have the Holy Spirit by my side
I'm trying to read the Bible more often, and use it as my guide
Before I never bothered, it never even crossed my mind
Having faith to believe was hard for me to find
But now I understand for our sins you died on the cross
I want to thank you for everything,
Especially finding me when I was lost
You are the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the last
Please wash away my sins and forgive me for my past
So tonight before I sleep for my loved ones and family I pray
Wishing them the best and waking up to a new day
Amen

A Brief Sojourn

I sojourned,
Once,
Briefly
Once upon a time,
The locals called
"Earth"

The third rock out
From their mid-life star,
It was…

But, I must say
I didn't much enjoy
My stay…

It was certainly pretty enough
—as were the women!—
And quite wonderfully orderly and self-sustaining…

A marvelous, and beautiful, little sphere it was, actually…

But the inhabitants
—"People," they were called—
My God, the people…

All full of nutty
Religious ideas
And actually killing one another
Over them…

Because God was on their side

And actually elaborating
Endlessly
Upon basic Truths
So fundamentally simple and pure…

And self-righteous
Man, you've never seen the like…

And they slew on another,
Not only for ecclesiastical
But for all sorts of other
Reasons as well,
And I mean all the time…

Over women, and dogs, and land
And drugs, and money, and drug-money
You name it…
Instead of creating,
Along with God,
They just loved, so much, to destroy

It was really kinda depressing…

Most wantonly desecrating
Their lovely little world
Just for a little short-term gold in their pockets…

I can vaguely, recollect a few Kindnesses,
Yet, overall
The race known as "mankind"
Just had their collective heads
Stuck up their collective butts…

Well, I'm long gone now
And many planets have I visited
And many planes of existence
Have I experienced since…

But that journey to Earth,
As I recall,
Was a particularly bad one,
Quite disturbing…

And it both left its mark,
And took its toll
Upon me,
I'm afraid…

I just hope I don't have to go back.

"WILD BILL" BARNES

This next writer is a very brilliant man. He's blown us away time and time again and we're happy he's being published again in this issue. He hits us with three amazing poems each taking on a character of their own. In the first, he maps out introspection as he attempts to figure out what "I" means to him. Basically, talking about what it means to just be. The second, and our personal favorite, is a very creative poem about a man who visits many planets. He comes to Earth and falls in love with the atmosphere, but instantly recognizes the foolishness of the human race. You know, how we were made to both create and destroy, but most of the time we choose to destroy. And the last is about his mind, which he metaphorically compares to a razor. The sharpening of his mind is also the dwindling of it, just like a razor. He's writing from the Marion Correctional Institution in Marion, North Carolina if you don't already know.

The Razor

My mind feels like a razor
Slicing thru'
New ideas
With incisive ease

Yet the whetstone
Upon which
It has been keened
Has been such terrible,
Unremitting tragedy

That, in its sharpening
So has been its destruction…

Over women, and dogs, and land
And drugs, and money, and drug-money
You name it . . .

I

"I"
I've asked before,
And I'll ask again…
Just what the heck
Is it?

So "ephemeral,"
It is,
This concept…

My dear Father,
Nearly died,
Twice…

Once, from nearly
Cutting his foot off
With an ax
And, another time,
A "Last Rites" time,
From being crushed
By a tree…

Would "I" have
Existed without him?

Obviously, this
Corporeal body "I"
Now inhabit
Would not have…

Yet, as Descartes said:
"I think, therefore I am."

Sooo,
It is my feeling
My deepest feeling, that
"I"
—whatever this really is—
Does, indeed,
Exist.

LA CIN ACHIM ***Our deep thinker is back on the scene and he's hitting us harder than ever this week. We love Achim because he has the uncanny ability to take ideas that we have believed as right without challenging them, and turning them into meaning something else. And most of the time, we like his definition of things rather than society's collective definition. He breaks things down to put them back together in a larger context. A lot of what we learn in the United States is segmented where as Achim brings it to what it means as a whole. Rather than looking through a small scope at things, he sees the bigger picture and relates that to us. We appreciate all of his insight and wisdom. We can't wait to hear from him again, he keeps us motivated to search for the truth in a world built on lies and deception. He's writing from Salinas Valley State Prison in Soledad, CA.***

RECONCILIATION

We all seek reconciliation with ourselves, others, and "our" Gods. Yet, to most this goal continually looms beyond grasp. In all honesty, the average individual has not and does not know the meaning of being reconciled. Thus, how can a person receive what he or she does not know or understand?

To the loving and caring, reconciliation happens more often than not, through some accomplishments. It can also occur through tolerance and acceptance of what is, as it exists.

We mostly hear and have not learned to listen. We are, in most instances, not reconciled with others because we do not love and are not loving. We attempt to have the other agree, thus it becomes your ideas versus mine.

Ideologies, dogmas, and politics by their very nature are seldom if ever reconcilable, but people are inherently reconcilable, divorced from our personas, not advocating and without agendas. True reconciliation is an understanding of self (not demanding that the other agree with you) and once we have an understanding of who we are, then the diversities between others appears natural, raging from enlightening to amusing. Literally, it is our frictional-diversities that engenders psychological growth. For what appears to be chaotic is our approach to relationships is an understanding of synchronization. Our differences complement each other and afford us a growth opportunity through introspection.

Few, would aspire to great heights if it were not for an ingrained need to change things to make a difference. We all desire to improve our quality of life and the lives of others. In essence our diversities is a gathering and a release; the concordance within us gathers and our discordance releases. It is this attraction and repulsion that is our reconciliation, the viable-cohesiveness of our humanity. It is our logical minds that causes us to think that there should be an orderly, somewhat civilized process to growth and relationships. The universe is a living reputation of that presumption. The differences between individuals may be uncontrollable. However, we can learn to manage these differences. Unfortunately, the very elixir of our growth may become frustrating; too much of each others differences will cause an overdose and a break down of our abilities to digest, to cope and to interact with others. If another speaks on ten subjects, and you are able to appreciate and reconcile yourself with two issues of the subject-matter, then simply discard the eight and benefit from and utilize the two.

Simply accept what you can. Discard what you cannot use. We are too thick skinned. Even the most intellectual and knowledgeable of individuals cannot speak for any lengthy period without saying something absurd. We all say something that one or another will most certainly disagree with. We are too judgmental. We take ourselves too seriously. We only need to be sincere not serious...

An Awaken Spirit

We are here
Emerged in this wonderment
We call self
The ecstasy of true self
Is the feeling of doing
To have meaning
To be full of purpose
To be connected

YOU KNOW
You all know the feeling
We struggle the limits
Of our very being
In surviving the night
To greet the day

And in the wake
Of our sadness
There is happiness
Then it begins
All over again

Inside and outside there is violence
We must resist things hateful
Knowing in our hearts
Things hateful hate

We speak and listen
To feel what we feel
To do what we do
Then we wonder the good of it all

To just speak more freely
To feel good
To only know that this moment is true
To be true self unashamedly so

NO sanctuary
No shelter
To comfort or caress
The soul of
A weary traveler
My-Breath-To-Catch

TRADITIONALISM

Returning to the traditional values of the "good old days," is what many are seeking. However, what are traditional values? More importantly, why need we return, and how did we move away from them.

Human values are defined as: Standards or principles considered necessary or important to life? A cursory review of any history book, will reveal, the history of human kind as one continuous "horror" story. In no time period throughout history have "we" collectively demonstrated or practiced any life-affirming standards or principles.

People have been genocide, enslaved, exploited and abused in the name of religion, politics, race, law, and order or in the service of some insane leader. Of course, one might respond that those were just negative events in history, and that major accomplishments were made. Question being: at whose expense? Historically, the so-called traditional values and good times were mostly at the expense of those who were oppressed and disadvantaged.

In truth, "we" can neither return to traditional values nor look forward to contemporary values. It is this attempt at remembering/returning to traditional values and looking forward to contemporary values that have doomed "us" to repeat the grievous mistakes of the past. Values are individualistic and do not lend themselves to a general society. Realistically, collectively, traditional values never existed in any time period.

Today are the good old days. The good old days and traditional values of the past are inapplicable, and realistically don't exist. It is only in here/now, the present, we may extract values, traditional or otherwise.

First Man Of Color

The last week or so many of my dreams have been about ancient times. Like the Ice Age Era. When the Wooly Mammoths roamed the earth, huge Caribous meandered the Forrest, horses that were short, and lots of animal life.

Sunday night I dreamed I was talking to the first man of color. His name was Wu'in. Wu'in had several designs on his face. He said that he was a Holy man from far away. I began to compare notes on the various herb of the region with Wu'in. Wu'in was telling me that in his travels he had heard about clans who had eaten the flesh of many animals. Wu'in than smiled and laughed, probably at my shocked look.

I said "Only the flesh of the Totem animals are supposed to be eaten." Wu'in said, in his visions people were not only eating flesh of the Totem animals but other animals as well. I must have looked shocked again because Wu'in laughed. I told him that I had ridden on the back of a four-legged animal. It was Wu'in turn to look shocked!

We talked by the fire long into the night, then slept under the stars with a cold wind blowing from the steep mountains. The next day I got a look at symbols which Wu'in tattooed on his face. They looked familiar. Sort of Indian. Sort of like ruins.

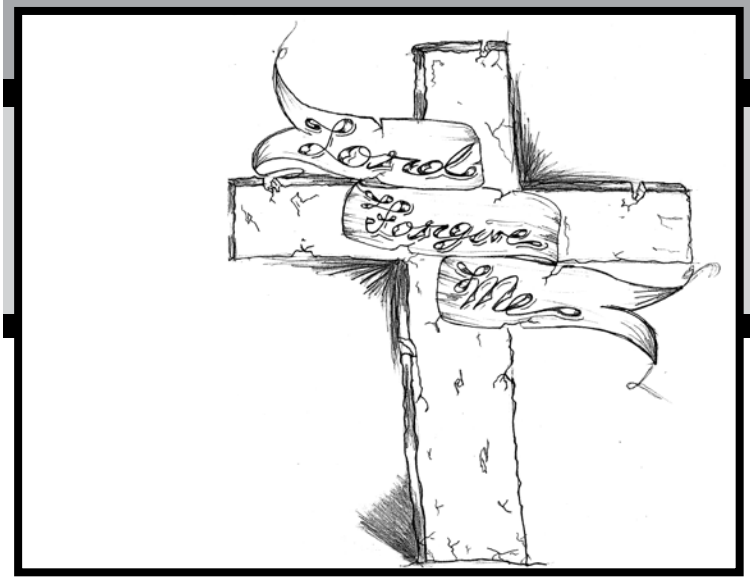
Wu'in saw me looking at the headband and said, "Although you are a blessed spirit, the tattoos are only for the light bodies to see." Wu'in told me about a device that he could sit on that allowed him to cross the water without getting wet.

Wu'in believed that the light bodies spoke with all the two legged ones; however only a few of "us" listened to them and what they have to offer. When we do listen to them they have taught us ways to make our lives better. The light bodies gave us a gift of knowledge. This knowledge has kept "us" alive during the times of the ice age. Much to my surprise, Wu'in believed that in several generations the Mountains of Ice would turn into water, than the valleys would be filled with water. The land would move and four legged creatures would either die or change.

Winged ones would change forms, maybe even walk among us... I was captivated. It was so much for me to imagine! Wu'in grinned and hugged me with tears in his eyes. He was convinced that I was truly a seer. He knew I was feeling and trusting his words. My instincts all told me he was right.

I was leaping forward imagining my children, grandchildren, other children not having to wear heavy fur for warmth. How free it would feel to have our skin against the wind. I saw it, felt it... Something!

Later, Wu'in and I were speaking without words: He and I had minds that could take in thoughts, looking far back into the past and far ahead into the future. Wu'in used the example of riding horses. How did it come to be? Thought — a desire. What about the water crossing water device?



LA CIN ACHIM (CONT.)

Thought — a desire to do it. Wu'in asked me what I thought would happen if we were both living and being in the same area? If the light beings would talk more to us, since there would be two of us? Or if they would dislike us? Should we stay together or separate?

I invite him to spend the night, and stay in my cave; I suggested that the time was right... learn. In learning we would know if the light beings were displeased. We smiled at each other. I felt hopeful and excited about "truth seeking" we were about to embark upon. Sunrise the next morning Wu'in was gone. I looked in the distance, wondering if the light being had taken him... I was also questioning if I'd ever see him again...

When I awoke from this dream, I instinctively knew that the Shaman, Wu'in, the first man of color, was ME!

Commentary: I have had several dreams of this period. I'm hunting with a big stick, gathering food and usually traveling alone. I have a cave dwelling and I appeared to be settled into it real nice. I can see a glacier from the opening of my dwelling.

This makes me wonder about all the studies and analytical data that must go into the study of ancient cave dwellings. The prediction of these studies is that they are analytically descriptive of the lives and times of the ancient people. I wasn't given my hands blisters, in an attempt to carve current events into the stone cells. My drawings were about mystical visions and dreams of the future. The human race is sometimes so absurd. In their interpretation of the past, they readily forget the same concepts that they apply to their daily lives that would have applied in ancient times.

Life breathes, grows, changes and shifts. It has many dimensions, facets, colors and shades. How can we accurately define it? I think I must come from our search for identity. A need to understand the unknown, to own, to conquer it.

In the minds of many people if they see something they don't understand they feel this need and act as if they have the right to define it.

Tree Of Life

In this dream I was observing from a distance several large light beings. They were hovering around this light source that had a vortex light arrangement along the outside of it. One of these light beings were communicating that he would stay on this planet, he was fond of the terrain.

The others were questioning the judgment in leaving the knowledge archives here when they left. There was much discussion about the fact their home (on a faraway galaxy) was all but destroyed; because the beings had the knowledge to proceed, progress, and evolve without giving themselves time to process and apply the knowledge of wisdom involved.

The light beings of their home planet had failed to understand the application of that growth, of which lead to more problems than solutions, more questions than answers. The one who was staying suggested that the knowledge archives be tucked away throughout the planet to be found in time. That people in search of truth who were living nearby these places would be affected and absorb these truths by its mere nearness.

They discussed how would they begin to determine what would go where. They suddenly became amused and decided that they had been here for too long; for they had started to think in arrogant terms. They could not decide what would stay where. The light being who stayed suggested that they scan the planet for energy filled spots and take the archives to those areas; let the land absorb and record that which it choose to.

The one who was staying said: "We'll call it the Tree of Life." Deep sigh! Commentary: Imagine what this theory would do to the Christian concept of the Tree Of Life?

SAM CAPERS ***This next writer used to be known as Silent Sam, but although his name has slightly changed, the thought-provoking ideas that are rooted in his brain are still amazing. This week he hits us with three poems and a commentary about terrorists killing terrorists. Yes, you guessed right, he's talking about the great country we all live in. It's sad that our country is so destructive that we can kill others in the name of safety. Safety from what? A lot of us believe safety from created occurrences that have us ignorantly believing we have enemies out of the blue. Everyone knows that you have to make enemies and people aren't just born to hate us. So, why are people still backing our war overseas? Is it for money? For oil? Well, delve deep into the mind of this wise man and witness his perspective on international politics. His three poems are equally as great. His last and concluding poem was what it means to be unloved. And it's very sad... We know he has a very strong mind, so we have faith he'll be able to keep his head up. Thank you for everything you've shared with us so far. It's been our pleasure to get to know you through pen and paper. He's writing from San Quentin State Prison in San Quentin, CA.***

Terrorist Killing Terrorist

Society has categorized Muslims and those of any relation to the Middle East religious system as terrorists. Suicide bombers, high jacked air planes, dirty bombs, sub way bombings. The list goes on and on. Yet, does American society really understand or have the faintest idea at to what is "really" going on? Or is it poison that media and stereotypical individuals spread like an infections cancer, that plays it main role in twisting the points of view of the citizens of this country and manipulates them to becoming anti Islamic, Anti-Middle Eastern?

Society has categorized America as the home of the free. God's chosen nation. They are suppose to be the defenders of world politics. Those who suffer under the oppression of Islamic extremists. A country to where all races and nationalities are able to live in peace and harmony. Without fear to live equally with one another. Who's duties are to serve in the armed forces, sit in for jury duty report, law breakers, teach love and Christianity, oh yes, place your hand on the bible. The book of western world spiritually.

Yes society has categorized themselves as being superior to those outside of their world. Still there is always blown grass, even in the midst of the grassy green hills. And friend the brown grass is what I call hypocrisy. The question is who are the real terrorist?

When American troops got sent to Vietnam, they murdered and killed innocent women and children. Still U.S.A got her ass tore up. Let's keep in mind, those in political power sat back in the oval office calling the shots while the brain washed soldiers thought they were doing what was right when Osama Bin Laden ordered the jet liners to fly head on the world trade center as well as other targets, this country threw a hiss fit and retaliated by smashing on Afghan soil.

I can go on and on about how America has committed mass genocide to other countries. Killing their young and destroying their lives. In light of mass genocide, what's so disgustingly ironic, is the fact that, our government is committing mass genocide to it's own damn people!! With the bills that were vetoed to pull our troops out of Iraq by our lame brain president "no pun intended" we have lost over 10 soldiers so far alone this month!!

On another note, Islamic extremists are paving the way for conservative Muslims to struggle and live fearfully due to the twisted ideologies of Al Qaida forces, etc. It is these same terrorists who are killing the true and peaceful citizens of Islamic State, Islam does not condone Terrorism, though many extremists twist the teachings of the Qur'an thus, yes there are Islamic terrorists who have bent over backwards to make a mess of things.

America is not all that innocent either folks, this country was founded by Europeans who claimed that they discovered this soil. Folks from Spain hit the scene and put in work to earn their bones. All the while, the natives of this land was manipulated to give up what was rightfully theirs. And if things were not given to them willingly then our natives were killed.

Now Christians, from what I have learned, began with the Catholic Church, which was also forced mind you upon the Indians, and who ever else were considered savages in the churches eyes, and once again, if the natives did not comply nor accept their religion, they were killed. They were butchered, they were boiled alive. Want to know the truth? No what's being taught in local schools, but the truth? Read up on the inquisition the battle of Little Big Horn and Pine Ridge. Read up on how the Africans and Hispanics were put through slavery and stripped of all dignity and honor. Learn how the Japanese during the world war two were placed into concentration camps. Places such as Amachi, Colorado, where my grandmother, may she rest in peace, was raped, beat and left half dead, while my great grandmother could do nothing about it.

This country is real good at concealing the truth. Our kids are being brain washed, schools are told what or what not to teach, "Oh, some things are too damaging for our children to hear, learn and know." Has it ever dawned on you that the truth will open the eyes of the children? That the "lies" are what's actually causing grief in our society of today's day and age?

Back to the issue. It seems that America has pushed upon the weaker countries, well, because they can get away with it. When the Islamic extremists started smashing here in the land of the free "I'm rolling my eyes" it was because the Middle East had something the greedy ass Americanos wanted. Whatever is in the best interest for those at the White House especially financially that when the bullying begins!! In reality every president as well as those before him, ain't nothing but a mob boss sending his army of forces out to do his dirty work while their blood is on his hands and the money the soldiers died for lines his pockets.

When other countries fight back they are wrong. USA wants them to lay there and lick their nuts. Do you see the pattern? For centuries, America has done more damage to their own than to others who truly deserve it. When men and women join the armed forces, they are taught to fight for what's right and against what's wrong. Their ability to read between the lines is impaired by the sense of self-worth and pride, which steadily pumped into their poor dilutioned minds. They become in mind, body and spirit, weapons of mass destruction my friends, here's my point.

America you claim to live lives as Christians. Yet you kill and slaughter innocent families and destroy homes, you're all for ridding of terrorists. For invading countries and trying to take full control of situations that basically is none of your business. Hey, did you know that you killed and are still killing Christians every time our troops go out?

Muslims and my people of color, did you know there was Muslims in the world trade center, when it went down? Both of them? How about on the planes that brought them down? Those who struggle to fit in on a daily basis, because of the color of their skin, the shape of their eyes, the accent of their voice? When we fight and kill one another, or join the armed forces do you understand that we only get weaker and lose while they get stronger and win?

In closing, there are terrorist in every country and every country is governed by terrorists. I am here on death row for the murders of two drug dealers. And American soldiers have and are still being honored for committing acts of genocide. So tell me people is this country as innocent as it claims to be? I think not.

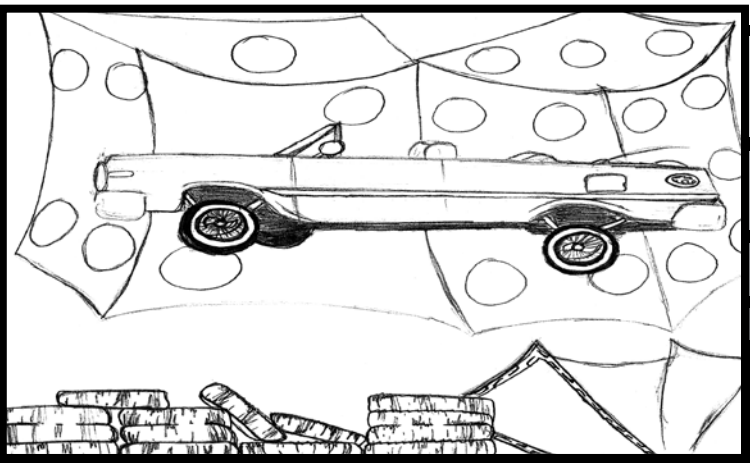
Please Note: If I pissed many of you off, yes, that sure was, is, and always will be my intentions. And if you can't live with it then maybe you need to evacuate what's in your heart and open up your minds as to what the truth really is. Every race and ethnicity of color has suffered by the hand of the pale skinned, blond haired, blue eye devil. They even oppress their own. Ponder that thought.

Death Land

By a route obscure and lonely
Haunted by lil' angels only
Where death land named night
On a black throne reigns upright
I have reached this land newly
Old demons work to school me
From a wild weird world sublime
Reapers matrix dance out of time
Bottomless valleys and boundless floods
And chasms, caves and suffer woods
With forms that no man can discover
The tears of blood that spills all over
Mankind toppling ever more
Into seas of fire without a shore
Seas restlessly burn a spire
Unto skies of hateful desire
Lakes of death endlessly out spread
Their scorching waters lone and dead
Their unrest waters toss and turn
With acid rain, for peace they yearn
By the lakes that reigns out spread
Their desperate waters lone and dead
Their unrest waters toss and turn
With acid rain for peace they yearn
By the mountains near the river
Moaning slowly, crying ever
By the gray woods by the swamp
Where the boa and toads encamp
By the cold tarns and pools
Where dwell the hellish ghouls
By each spot the most unholy
Driving deep to desoul me
There the traveler meets, aghast
Tormented memories of the past
Shrouded forms that groan and cry
As they pas the head men by
In green clad forms of enemies a given
Agony to man, she's called San Quentin
For her heart whose woes are legion
Is a peaceful yet desolate region
As the dead men walk in her shadow
Accepting more than they can handle
Put the traveler traveling through it
May not dare, to openly view it
Never it's mysteries are exposed
To the weak human eye unclosed
For the queen, who hath forbid
The uplifting of the fringed lid
And though sad the soul here passes
Beholds it but through darkened glasses.
By a route obscure and lonely
Haunted by lil angels only
Where death land, named night
On a black throne reigns upright
I am home but rather newly
Where old demons work to school me...

In green clad forms of enemies a given
Agony to man, she's called San Quentin
For her heart whose woes are legion
Is a peaceful yet desolate region

SAM CAPERS (CONT.)



The Unloved

Unloved is he who writes
These unheard cries of sorrow
Who's hopes and shattered dreams
Is all that waits tomorrow
No other understands him
Nor do they take the time to try
Unloved is he who writes these words
Anxiously awaiting his day to die
Will that day be peaceful
As he leaves this world alone
It is soul in pain never rests
Until he makes his final voyage home
To him the stars no longer twinkle
And the sun no longer shines
Unloved is he who cries out for help
With evident despair within his eyes
Angels no longer sing their chorus
The birds song has gone flat and dim
Late at night the tears keep falling upon his deathly bed
he swims
Without a speck of hope he fights,
To find a friend so dear
Embracing with all of his strength
Drained of all happiness joy and cheer
Unloved is he who wonders why
His day of birth has taken place
Even though he suffers so, so much
Keeps an unmovable and indifferent face.

Sweet Torture

Silently screams father time
Unaware of the windy bows
Created out of seas of pain
Seeking yet not finding why or how
Each second parishes much slower
Frantically running a circle of neglect
Looked down on as some inhuman monster
Shown neither love acceptance nor respect
In the daylight he's cold and lonely
Falls asleep hungry sad, alone so alone
The trench of hopelessness a dwelling
Tossed to the wayside of life's roads
Misfits wander listlessly confused
Blind love tears exists not in spirit
As the silent scream shrills through time
The loved and accepted refused to hear it
In a midst of an unforgiving world
The silent screams go unheard
Not a soul who shows compassion no
Not even a gracious or kindly word.

FLAW ***This next first time writer gave himself the wrong name, for we see no flaws in his writing. He's an eighteen-year-old Native American man who has a very precious heart. He sent love poems to us and his mind has an endless why of rhyming. From what we can tell so far, he likes to keep a consistent rhyme scheme, which is actually very fun to read. He's writing from Pelican Bay State Prison in Crescent City, CA, and hopefully he gets a copy of The Beat Within he's published in because we want to continue our correspondence through the magazine with him.***

Real

Please. Please do not refuse what is real,
I am here just for you; it can become so true that you might at first perceive our love as surreal
It can be under lock and key with kisses providing the permanent seal,
If your face was once hidden, believe my affection can remove the veil,
There will be no more vulnerability, naught left for those crooks to steal,
Without you, to me everything would simply not appeal,
Know that it is the past wounds of your heart I am here to heal,
No more taking life by your lonesome, allow me to take the wheel,
To steer you in the right direction, for true love is what we shall feel,
True love is what we shall reveal,
Henceforth, supreme comfort is what we can feel,
So baby, please do not refuse this that is real

In Essence Of Love

Here I stand alone
Here I have no home
Here I walk within sorrow, here I just roam,
Not alone by my side, to help cope
Here encompassed by black at its pitchest, I grope,
I grope for someone to hold; yet my soul seems bound by rope
Since as I have not alone, solely a horrendous slope,
I remain within me no desire within me any hope.

Constant Cure

I find myself thinking,
Thinking of you, in attempt to prevent myself from sinking,
All seems against, opposed to my person,
All around me I feel the falseness blinking,
I feel the falseness blinking against the back of my person;
I can feel the hate drinking,
I can feel the hate desperately drinking up my will of strength to resist;
I can feel my conscience shrinking,
Here I find myself thinking,
Thinking of you, in attempt to keep myself from sinking,

Reality hits and you need the drug,
Built up in a sink and the herb pulls the plug

KEITH SMITH ***This next writer is one we love because he has a way with the younger generation that seems to be very effective. Let's not preach to them because who likes being preached to. Especially at an age where are attention levels are really low because our minds are racing through a thousand different thoughts each minute. In his piece, "Brighter Days," he lets the younger generation know that incarceration means suffering, and where there's suffering, soon after comes brighter days. He hasn't written us in awhile because he transferred to the California Department of Corrections in Norco, CA. He's now taking part in a drug rehabilitation program, so hopefully he'll be able to gain some tools that can help him live a life without the hassle of desiring drugs. We usually are inspired by what he writes and this week is no different. Read on and find out.***

Brighter Days

To the striving youth – today is the day that you can stop and ask yourself what's next? I am speaking mainly to youth that are in juvenile halls, boy's ranch, CYA and after-school workshops. I'm from East Palo Alto and I have been through all places that I just mentioned. A lot of times I felt like my world was coming to an end but I got a hold of myself and said that it's not over yet, because to give up on myself would really mean that it's really over.

I am in prison right now, and this place is no joke because of all the prison gangs and prison politics, not being able to talk to a different race most of the time because of your peers here. Behind these walls a lot of things go on. That's why I'm telling you all these things because you have a chance to change your path because you have a lot of choices in your life. There's more to life than living in the system from making poor choices. You have to start today, setting positive goals for your future because it is not too late. The time you are doing will be over soon. Even if you are in the after-school workshops it's time to focus up and start doing the right thing because life is too short to live it all behind these walls. It's important that you know you are somebody and today is the day that you can start working on bettering yourself so that you don't make it here where I am.

With that all said, remember, your past don't have to be your future, and tell a friend!

GLENN URMANN ***We really have a treat for you all with this next first time writer. He just heard about The Beat Within not too long ago and decided to send us a poem. We're can't express how happy we are he did because his writing is off the charts. In his poem he tackles the experience of being addicted to weed and how his higher power has played a huge role in him thinking twice about his addiction. Sometimes it's hard for people who need to smoke weed to realize they have a problem because weed is so socially acceptable, especially in the great state of California. His poem also has a very consistent and easy flowing rhythm to it. He's writing from the Sonoma County Jail in Santa Rosa, CA. We're glad he's working on his addiction. Hopefully, he'll be able to continue staying clean once he gets out to temptation.***

Addiction

I was on a train soon to be derailed,
Drifting afloat like a boat with no sails,
Trapped in a hole with no rope to climb out,
Screaming for help but with no voice to shout,
So hard to breathe when engulfed by the smoke,
Gasping for air only brings on a choke,
Calling again from a voice in my head,
Constant addiction that never gets fed,
Feasting all day, but it keeps wanting more,
Smells all around me so hard to ignore,
I never knew Satan grew in a plant,
When burned the smoke has an addicting dance,
But God is the sun that gives the plant light,
Satan crawls through the root and grows at night,
Inhale this herb and leave all your troubles,
When the herb leaves you your problems double,
Reality hits and you need the drug,
Built up in a sink and the herb pulls the plug,
And now you feel drained of all your worries,
Your problems come slow but the herb hurries,
Like a forest fire burning inside,
So much fuel to burn the brain supplies,
It's all in your mind if you learn how it works,
It's a battle inside that surely hurts,
Come back to a place where your mind is at ease,
For addiction is the devil's disease,
Walk with God, the creator of earth,
You will soon find that you no longer hurt.

The best thing to me Is when I get some mail Days I cry

DINA MARIA DE TILLIO

We're sure that everyone in Dina's situation would ask the same questions, so we aren't surprised by her wonderfully empathetic heart. As she writes way from the other side of the country, back east, in the Connecticut Correctional Facility in Niantic, Connecticut, we're overcome with sadness at the thought of what she must be experiencing being locked up with a child on the outside. Hopefully, some of you can feel her pain — we assume that you will...

Jail

Jail
You cannot smoke
Or toke
Trust
It's no joke
Jail
The best thing to me
Is when I get some mail
Days I cry
Others I sigh
Missing my family
That cannot come nowhere near me
Loss of visits
No more of those precious 60 minutes
Jail
It's making me frail
Also when you turn around
There's always that next tale
Jail
Times I feel
I'm getting beat down with hail
No respect towards me
Some CO's they start to bore me
With them always coming towards me
With their non-sobriety!
Jail
Getting caught up in the system
To me was a blessing
It had fixed me
Hopefully that I can see
It sure did make the best of me
My thinking is clearer
Making me not want to get nearer
To that bad ass drug dealer
Need the change in my life
Old life will be far out of sight
Jail
Trust me
Trust me indeed
I have learned my lesson
And counted my blessings
The nightmares almost over
For now on I will stay sober
Jail
No more jail
This is not no tale
This shhh is fo' real!

Questions I Ask

To my sister Antonia
Is she thinking of me?
Does she sleep at night?
Is she still using her blankie?
Does she ever ask for her mommy?
What kind of new foods is she eating?
What new words is she learning?
Is she still going on the potty?
Does she ever ask for her mommy?
What new cartoons is she into?
Who does she play with?
Is she ok?
How are you punishing her?
I hope it's the time out way
And not the spanking way.
Why haven't you let her write to me?
You know what I mean,
By drawing pictures for her mommy!
Antonia, I don't think you realize how hard it is
For me being a mommy
Not being able to see
The one and only thing
That matters to me
Which is my beautiful baby!

The Past

No more words of hurt
No more words of hatred
Words of peace
And intelligence
That shall be sacred
I want to be on my high
And so I shall not lie
No more of my bottoms
That will cause me more problems
The past is in the past
Time to move on
Which I will do very fast
I have made many faults
I do apologize to the ones I've hurt
I do promise there will be "no more" bursts
The future has come. And take me away
To be clean and free
And to take all the good advice.

GREG JOHNSON

Anyone who's ever been locked up will feel this next poem. And guess what? It was written by a veteran OG Beat writer we haven't heard from in quite some time — too long if you ask us. But anyhow, there are feelings that come up when it's about that time of day when mail call is coming around. For those of you who don't know, mail call is the time when the correctional officers, staff, counselors, police, (whatever they're called nowadays) come around and pass out all the mail. Out here mail is taken for granted because usually people dread opening the mailbox to find bills and things of that nature. But in jail, mail is the highlight of the day for most because that's when you receive concrete words from people who actually care about you. Which, also, says a lot about the power of writing. For while in jail, phone calls are great but a lot of times after the phone conversation is over, we'd like something tangible to take to our cells to read over and over again. That's the power of a letter. And you'll see the anxiety that comes with mail call as Greg has mapped it out for us in his poem. He's writing from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA, and we would be disappointed if we had to wait for his next letter as long as we did this time... Thanks ol' friend!

Mail Call

Darkness and loneliness fill my cell
With pain and fear too great to yell
I wait for the mailman to deliver to me
As I wipe away tears that no one will see
I pray so sincere with head raised above
"Please God, soon send a letter of love."
I long to gaze upon pages so dear,
With riches to bring my loved ones near
Words of diamonds on pages of gold
A message from heaven as their story is told
"We love you, miss you, and pray you'll be free"
A treasure-filled envelope just for me
Please bring memories of joys I once knew
Family, friends and things I would do
The darkness and pain of my cell will prevail
As my name, again was not called for mail.

A lot of people think jail is a joke and tend to keep entering the revolving door like it's the thing to do. This is my first time for everything and I experienced juvenile hall, CYA, County Jail and Prison all before I was even eighteen . . . Remember I was a kid when I entered and when I leave I'll be an adult with nothing to show for it.

read the rest of Edward Atkins' BWO piece on page 41